



**THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL SCIENCES
GENDER STUDIES UNIT**

BODY NORMATIVITY AND THE HYPER(IN)VISIBILITY OF ABJECT BODIES

Living with Oppression in the Body Liberation Movement

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Thesis:	30 hec
Program:	Master's Programme in Gendering Practices
Level:	Second Cycle
Semester/year:	St/2022
Supervisor:	Jacob Bull
Examiner:	Juan Velasquez
Report No.:	

Abstract

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Keyword: Hyper(in)visibility, body normativity, oppression, intersectionality, transgender, disability, fatness, body liberation movement, resistance

In feminist studies that attempt to theorize embodiment, fat bodies have largely been ignored and excluded from research even though scientific knowledge on weight-based stigma and discrimination shows the importance of studying fatphobia as a system of oppression. Hence, this thesis provides an analysis on the lived experience of fat bodies in relation to body normativity and visibility politics. Additionally, it builds bridges to other abject bodies marginalized within gender studies, such as trans people and people with disabilities, to support shared struggles for radical social justice. Concerning the theoretical framework, the concept of intersectionality and theorization on body and beauty norms as well as abjection and ugliness are put forward. In addition, an Foucauldian understanding of power and visibility and Gailey's concept of hyper(in)visibility are employed. The methodology of the thesis is based on Haraway's concept of situated knowledge, complemented by Spivak's postcolonial approach and Baril's composite model of disability. The empirical material consists of a range of secondary sources extracted from the body liberation movement such as Instagram and blog posts, activist book chapters and YouTube videos. Using Braun and Clarke's method of reflexive thematic analysis, four main themes with respective subthemes are generated and discussed: 1) knowledge production on power structures, 2) mental health is health, 3) fat resistance and 4) solidarity and allyship. Lastly, the concepts of ambivalence, ordinariness and ugliness are argued for as supplementary strategies within fat politics. In summary, struggling against the hyper(in)visibility of abject bodies is concluded to be a collective task and for it to succeed, people need to work on themselves individually, in community and across coalitions.

Foreword

First, I would like to give a big thank you to my supervisor, Jacob Bull, who has patiently helped me through the ups and downs of this master thesis process and gave me all the time, freedom and encouragement I needed to finish it. I am very grateful for all of your persistent guidance, honest feedback and trust in my abilities.

Moreover, I want to thank my family and all of my friends - the ones from home, the ones that are scattered around the world and all the new ones that I made within my time here in Gothenburg. You are my rocks and moments of joy and laughter. Thank you for all your emotional support, kind messages, emergency phone calls, dinners over skype, coffee breaks, walks through nature, home cooked meals and hugs.

Endless gratefulness and an extra special guren *glassui go out to Ramona Abdallah and Eva-Maria Wölfel. I know that I could not have written this thesis without the support, love and compassion that the two of you gifted me this whole time - but especially during the last month - on a daily basis. In moments of deepest doubt and helplessness you always believed in me and lifted me up even though you were struggling yourself with finishing your respective academic works. We snailed on and flew on rainbows together and that means the world to me. Seriously, I cannot thank you enough: يخليا ياكى and Tausend Dank.

Lastly, I want to pay my respect to all the people that are working so tirelessly and endlessly for a more just, inclusive and kind world. Especially the most marginalized among us and the ones that came before me, that have put their lives at risk by sharing their radical ideas and demands. I am immensely thankful to be able to learn from you and for all of your hard labour. And I want to continue honouring it by doing my part as best as I can.

Additionally, before proceeding further, I want to put out a trigger warning about the content of this thesis, since it theorizes and directly cites lived experiences of bodily oppression.

CW: Weight-loss, eating disorders, fatphobia, racism, transphobia, ableism

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1. Introduction

Knowledge production is the practice of creating, researching, analysing and documenting critical ideas, which can provide some observation about worldly phenomenon. And yet, the work of knowledge production, much like most other areas of human life, is laden with power relations. [...] While there is an old adage that “knowledge is power”, insofar as knowledge arms you with the capacity to make better, more informed choices in the world, power also determines *who and what can be known* and who is allowed to be a “knower”; in this way, *power is knowledge* (Nketiah 2019).

As the knowledge management specialist Rita Nketiah from the African Women’s Development Fund precisely highlights, power structures define whose and which perspectives can be seen and heard as well as what *is* commonly considered as knowledge worth knowing in academia and everyday life. While the overall knowledge production in the academic community has been critically questioned by anti-racist, postcolonial, queer, trans, disabled, postmodern and feminist scholars, the continuous engagement with epistemological problems and general exclusions remains important. Interrogating silences within gender studies, especially when looking at research on embodiment, Kyrölä and Harjunen argue that feminists “may pay careful attention to gendered, racialised and sexualised body management culture through the slender, grooming, dieting, eating disordered or surgically modified body, but include little or no attention to questions of fat, despite fat’s status as a key site of anxieties over bodily excess and fluidity today” (2017: 106).

The silence around fatphobia within gender studies is significant, given the existing knowledge about the impact of anti-fat bias on women’s lives as uncovered in Fikkan and Rothblum’s review on weight-based stigma and discrimination. Thus, the question arises why “the fat body has largely been ignored in feminist studies that attempt to theorize the female body” (2012: 588, after Hartley 2001: 61). In her research on fat activism, Cooper therefore concludes that “fat people should be recognised as important knowledge producers and that academics and policy-makers of all sizes should support fat people in claiming space to produce that knowledge” (Felkins 2019: 184, after Cooper 2016: 589).

Beyond mainstream gender studies there has been extensive research in the interdisciplinary field of fat studies about fat experience, subjectivity and embodiment for several decades now (see Cooper 2010: 1020). Nevertheless, fatphobia still persists to be a fairly understudied system of oppression in both fields (see Saguy 2012: 695). Consequentially, scholars argue both for more research about the lived experience of fat bodies and for studying sizism together with other forms of oppression (see Fikkan/ Rothblum 2011: 587). It is therefore surprising that fatphobia is so neglected within gender studies, a discipline focussed on the intersecting structures of power, an oversight that maps onto the similar marginalisation of

trans and disabled bodies. Accordingly, researching and theorizing fatphobia, ableism and transphobia in conjunction is an especially valuable and seldom engaged with intersection that foregrounds both the commonalities and the differences of inhabiting abject bodies. Further, as Collins argues: “if marginalized groups are given a voice, or if their stories are told from their standpoint, those who are oppressed can gain power, control, and knowledge over their own lives” (Gailey 2014: 164, after Collins 1990). Social movements offer an important entry point for analysis, since they are sites of knowledge accumulation and generation and contain “ideas, debates, insights, and visions produced by people collectively working for social, economic, and political change and reflecting on their experiences and what has preceded them” (Coudry 2020: 28). This study provides such an analysis of the body liberation movement, a social movement that critically engages with the lived experiences of and the resistance to fatphobia. Patrilie Hernandez, an activist working within the field, describes the movement’s essence as follows:

Body Liberation means breaking free from internalized (otherwise known as intrapersonal) oppression to better equip us in recognizing and actively dismantling external systemic oppression. Body liberation is intersectional. Body liberation is more than being fat positive. Body liberation is actively anti-racist. Body Liberation is queer. Body Liberation is decolonization. Body Liberation is feminist. Body Liberation is sex-positive. Body liberation is anti-ableist. Body Liberation is socially just. Body liberation is necessary for collective liberation (Hernandez n.d.).

Its visions and goals thereby exceed other closely connected movements, such as body positivity, and it moreover attempts to represent various bodies that are regarded as abject.

Given the lack of research in gender studies from a fat feminist perspective about the lived experience of abject bodies, my thesis aims to provide an analysis on the lived experience of fat bodies in relation to body normativity and visibility politics. In addition, I will build bridges to other abject bodies marginalised within gender studies, such as trans people and people with disabilities, to support shared struggles for radical social justice. To achieve this aim I will address the following research questions: How are body norms theorized in the West? Which theoretical tools can be used to understand the lived experience of abject bodies in regards to visibility? How do people within the body liberation movement engage with these experiences and which strategies do they use to struggle against the hyper(in)visibility of their abject bodies? Moreover, the thesis will work towards providing additional concepts for alliance building between transgender, disability and fat activism.

Regarding the usage of terminology, there are a few points I want to address. Firstly, even though the word fat is within dominant discourse commonly used as a negative and derogatory term, it serves as a neutral descriptor for a certain body type and as a self-

proclaimed identity marker of individuals within this thesis (see Atherton 2021: 4; Snider 2018: 337). In contrast, ‘overweight’ and ‘obese’ are medical terms which result from the pathologization of embodiment and will therefore not be employed (see Kwan/ Graves 2013: 18; Fikkan/ Rothblum 2012: 576). Moreover, recognizing the ongoing discussion around person-first and identity-first language within the disability community, the terms ‘people with disability’ and ‘disabled people’ will be used interchangeably to honour people with either preference (see Rice et al. 2021: 97). Lastly, while the usage of the term ‘transgender’ refers in this thesis to the name of a social movement that advocates for gender self-determination and the freedom of gender identity and expression for all bodies as well as to the related activism and academic field, ‘trans’ is used as an inclusive and respectful umbrella term for the various gender identities outside the binary understanding (see Enke 2012: 18f).

To provide an in depth background for the thesis and to situate it within the existing scholarship on the topic, a literature review is presented. It introduces the field of fat studies as well as feminist fat studies, highlights connections to both disability studies and transgender studies, examines research results on body positivity, fat acceptance and fat activism and gives insight into academic knowledge on solidarity, coalition and alliance building. In the next chapter, the theoretical perspective is elaborated on whereby body normativity, oppression and visibility are central concepts. While the first subchapter introduces theorizing on intersectionality, westernized body norms and beauty ideals as well as on abjection, ugliness and negative emotions, the second subchapter expands on aspects of visibility and invisibility and foregrounds Gailey’s concept of hyper(in)visibility (see 2014). Thereupon Haraway’s understanding of situated knowledge (see 1988), Spivak’s decolonial approach (see 1998) and Baril’s composite model of disability (see 2015) are argued for as the methodological ground of the thesis and my positionality as well as the ethics are put forward. Afterwards, the processes of data collection and sampling of people from the body liberation movement are presented, an overview of the sample is given and Braun and Clarke’s reflexive thematic analysis (see 2019), which is the employed analytical method of the project, is introduced. Within the analysis of the empirical data, four themes with their respective subthemes will be discussed: 1) knowledge production on power structures, 2) mental health is health, 3) fat resistance and 4) solidarity and allyship. In addition, the concepts of ambivalence, ordinariness and ugliness will be argued for as having the potential of aiding alliance building between transgender, disability and fat activism. Lastly, the results of the analysis are summarized, the research questions are addressed and an outlook is given in the concluding chapter.

2. Previous Research

Looking more closely at previous research in the field of fat studies as well as about related social movements and activism, a comprehensive amount of scholarly work can be found that is connected to the thesis topic. Nevertheless, specifically fat feminist approaches that engage with the lived experience of abject bodies, bring together several marginalized subject positions and aim to further alliance building between related interdisciplinary fields and movements remain rare. This is where this thesis aims to assist in closing the research gap. To identify existing research related to the subject matter, an extensive list of keywords around the topics of non-normative embodiment (e.g. fat, trans, disabled), politics of beauty and ugliness, (in)visibility, social justice, activism and movements (e.g. body liberation, body positivity, fat acceptance), agency and resistance, knowledge production, oppression and alliance building was mixed and matched in search engines such as web of science and scopus. In addition, snowballing from key texts was applied. The academic literature used in this review and in the following theory section as well as the project as a whole is thereby mainly situated in the fields of gender studies, fat studies, feminist fat studies, transgender studies and (critical) disability studies. The subsequent sections will have a particular focus on feminist fat studies and its connections to the previously mentioned fields as well as on research about fat positive activism and alliance building.

2.1. Fat Studies and Feminist Fat Studies

Fat studies emerged through fat activism starting in the late 1960s (see Cooper 2016) and is nowadays “a post-disciplinary field of study that centres the fat body and lived experiences of fat people” (Pausé/ Taylor 2021a: 1). Due to the recent academic establishment of fat studies in the late 2000s (see Pausé/ Taylor 2021a: 6-8), many of the fundamental works can be found in *The Fat Studies Reader* (see Rothblum/ Solovay 2009), *The Routledge International Handbook of Fat Studies* (see Pausé/ Taylor 2021b) and the journal of *Fat Studies*, which publishes articles on theory, research and practices related to body weight and appearance since 2012 (see Harjunen 2017: 14). “Fat Studies has an extensive history and interdisciplinary literature which questions and problematizes traditional understandings of obesity and draws upon the language, culture and theory of civil rights, social justice and social change” (Cooper 2010: 1020). Opposed to the hegemonic ‘obesity’ discourse, fat studies scholars highlight the cultural meanings and materiality of fatness, investigate moralism and morality surrounding bodily weight (see Kyrölä/ Harjunen 2017: 106) and

name the cultural production of fatphobia as the problem instead of the fat body (see Cooper 2010: 1020).

A useful categorisation to get an overview of how fat is commonly framed in contemporary culture, is elaborated in Samantha Kwan and Jennifer Grave's research: namely in terms of a health frame, a choice and responsibility frame, an aesthetic frame and a social justice frame (see 2013: 12f). That is to say that within a health frame the fat body is commonly understood to be unhealthy, fat in an aesthetic frame is typically regarded as unattractive, within a choice and responsibility frame food consumption and fatness is assumed to be a matter of individual choice as well as responsibility and in a social justice frame fat is considered to be about discrimination and social inequality (see *ibid.*). Kwan and Graves moreover argue that the aesthetic as well as the health frame are the dominant ones and part of the popular imagination within western societies, "because their messages not only ring loud and far, but they also encourage body conformity. That is, they obligate individuals to conform to the body status quo, where compliance is embodied in the nonfat ideal" (*ibid.*: 13).

Thus, there has been a lot of research within fat studies addressing the health framing from a social justice perspective, whereby analytical concepts like (bio)medicalization, pathologization and healthism in relation to fatness have been central. Additional areas of research include fat history, fat stigma and oppression as well as fat identity and subjectivity (see Cooper 2010 and Pausé/ Taylor 2021a for a comprehensive review).

Looking at the relationship of feminist scholars to the field of fat studies, two general groups can be identified: on the one hand feminist researchers that are in line with the critical perspectives of the field and therefore stress the social and cultural aspects of fatness and on the other hand those that oppose these critiques made about the medicalization and pathologization of fat bodies when it comes to weight and health (see Kyrölä/ Harjunen 2017: 105). The latter group of feminists thereby "often criticise[s] bodily normativities but advocate[s] weight-loss dieting at the same time without seeing the paradox in that" (*ibid.*). Similarly, vice versa fat studies scholars too either actively engage with feminism and gendering practices or don't take feminist perspectives into account (see Farrell 2021: 52f).

Where both disciplines do overlap and inform each other, the field of feminist fat studies emerges. "Feminist fat studies draws on and contributes to gender, 'race'/ethnicity, disability, class and queer studies in its commitment to unravelling embodied normativities and imagining alternatives" (Kyrölä/ Harjunen 2017: 100). Mapping the research previously done in this area, Kyrölä and Harjunen point towards important places, where intersections of

feminism and fat studies were published in several special issues: the journals *Fat Studies*, *Social Semiotics*, *Somatechnics* and *Feminism & Psychology* (see *ibid.*). Moreover, important contributions on specifically feminist theorising of fatness are among others Abigail C. Saguy's book *What's Wrong with Fat* (see 2013), Irmgard Tischner's book *Fat Lives: Feminist Psychological Exploration* (see 2013), Hannele Harjunen's book *Neoliberal Bodies and the Gendered Fat Body* (see 2017), Amelia Morris' book *The Politics of Weight* (see 2019) and the previously mentioned article *Phantom/Liminal Fat and Feminist Theories of The Body* from Katariina Kyrölä and Hannele Harjunen (see 2017).

The latter is thereby especially of importance for this thesis, since it asks “what connects and disconnects fat corporeality and fat studies from ways of theorising other embodied differences, like gender, ‘race’, disability, class and sexuality” (Kyrölä/ Harjunen 2017: 99). While their theoretical focus is mainly on the mutability and removability of fatness and its significance for subjectivity, the introduced concepts of ‘phantom fat’ and ‘liminal fat’ are crucial for comprehending the lived experience of fat bodies (see *ibid.*):

Understanding experiences of fat as liminal facilitated asking what factors construct and support the idea of fatness as a temporary state even when it is not, and restrain people from thinking of fatness as a recognised part of their core selves and embodied subjectivities. [...] On a similar note as with ‘liminal fat’, the concept of ‘phantom fat’ is used to address the simultaneous rejection and persistence of fat corporeality (*ibid.*: 103).

By connecting the common demand to eliminate fatness as a means to improve fat people's lives to other identity markers such as gender, and ‘race’, the absurdity of the weight-loss request as an answer to a discriminatory surrounding gets unveiled: “If such a suggestion was made today about gender or ‘race’ – that the solution to racism was to bleach non-white people's skins, or the solution to sexism was gender reassignment surgery – that suggestion would be considered unfathomable, outrageous or simply a joke” (*ibid.*: 111). In summary, their argument is against the widely accepted framing of fat as liminal as well as phantom and in favour of acknowledging that fatness is for most a persisting and relatively stable embodied subjectivity (*ibid.*: 99).

Looking closer at the empirical evidence of the consequences of fatphobia on lived experience of women, Janna Fikkan and Ester Rothblum's review on the literature on weight-based stigma (see 2012) is crucial and furthered the discussion around fat being a feminist issue (see Chrisler 2011; Saguy 2012; Cooper Stoll 2019). Besides highlighting how fat women are negatively represented in mass media, have a lower status in romantic relationships and receive inadequate health care, Fikkan and Rothblum argue that it is not poverty that is fattening but fatness that is impoverishing due to discrimination. Regarding employment, fat

women are treated worse at their jobs, earn less money and their chance of getting hired is less likely than their thin peers. The same goes for educational settings, where they experience a penalty for their fatness that leads to less accumulation of education and ability to function in these structures (see Fikkan/Rothblum 2012: 587; Cooper Stoll 2019: 423; Atherton 2021: 14f). Therefore, they conclude their research findings as follows: “The price paid by women as a result of weight-based discrimination is significant, cuts across multiple domains, and yet has received relatively little attention by feminist scholars when compared with other topics relating to weight (e.g., eating disorders and body image disturbance) or with other sources of discrimination impacting women” (ibid.).

“While the negative associations with fatness are widely familiar, people who are not fat are less aware of what these negative associations and discriminatory attitudes *do* – the ways they structure the social world to produce specific unjust outcomes and experiences of discrimination for fat people” (Atherton 2021: 14f). In line with this argument, Kyrölä and Harjunen additionally stress that by ignoring and silencing the knowledge of fat people as well as lacking an understanding of “how embodied subjects do not just internalise or reject cultural discourses but live, feel and process them in complex ways” (2017: 105), this discrimination and inhumanisation is enabled in the first place.

2.2. Connections to Disability Studies and Transgender Studies

Examining gaps within the field of fat studies as well as feminist fat studies, it has to be noted that the majority of the research is centred around white, cisgender, female, middle-class bodies (see Friedman 2020: 244) and most of the published scholarship is in English and from the United States (see Pausé/ Taylor 2021: 10, after Cooper 2009a). Engaging with literature that connects feminist fat studies and disability studies as well as transgender studies can consequently be a first step to help shift the focus on more marginalized fat people and advance joint theorisation within and besides an intersectional framework.

As to be seen in the collection of articles in *The International Routledge Handbook of Fat Studies*, conscious efforts are made within the field to centre and amplify Black fat scholars and voices of fat people of colour. Moreover, the intersections between fatness and disability as well as gender nonconformativity are more routinely recognized to be important (see Pausé/ Taylor 2021). While finding several scholars during my own literature search that touch upon these topics within their works to a greater or lesser extent (see Dodson 2021; Dolan 2018; Fahs 2018; Friedman 2020; Gailey 2014; Kyrölä/ Harjunen 2017; Meleo-Erwin 2012; Snider 2018; Taub et al. 2003; Taylor 2021), particularly Francis Ray White has to be

highlighted for their in-depth academic engagement with the intersections of fat and trans (see 2014; 2020; 2021) and April Herndon when it comes to fatness and disability (see 2002; 2021). In the following, their research findings will be elaborated upon.

Regarding the connections between (feminist) fat studies and transgender studies, White shows in their review that there is little discussion about transness and fatness to be found in either of the fields (see 2014: 86) and that while transgender studies usually assumes thin people, fat studies commonly imagines cisgender people (see *ibid.*: 88). Furthermore, the research that does exist can be divided into two strands: analyses that compare trans experiences with fat experiences and the ones that look at the intersection of trans and fat (see White 2020: 110). Thereby reoccurring themes are being trans and fat, anti-discrimination law, trans participation and inclusion in fat activism as well as autobiographical/autoethnographical accounts of fat/trans authors (see *ibid.* 2021: 79).

“White (2014) also finds that trans and fat activists have different approaches to body malleability. While trans studies embraces the malleability of bodies via gender affirming technologies, Fat Studies tends to insist on the fixity of the fat body to resist fatphobia” (Taylor 2021: 278). As a consequence, the approaches to concepts of bodily fluidity and liminality differ and while trans narratives focus on processes of bodily transition, fat activist’s focal point is on changing one’s views on one’s body (see White 2014: 93).

Though White repeatedly stresses that fat people and trans people are not discrete groups (see White 2021: 85) and that the invisibility of trans/fat people demands for more intersectional analysis (see *ibid.* 2020: 111). Looking at accounts of lived experience at this intersection, the importance of thinking fatness and gender nonconformativity together gets illuminated: while several fat trans people report a difference in treatment depending on if they are read as male or female (see *ibid.* 2014: 89), fatness is often experienced by trans men as potentially undermining their gender legibility, troubles trans women’s femininity through the common demand of slenderness (see *ibid.*: 90) and can lead to an impossibility to pass as androgyn for non-binary people since fat bodies are always already ascribed binary characteristics (see *ibid.* 2020: 117). Fat can therefore not only enhance and magnify gender but as well undermine it (see Taylor 2021: 277; Kyrölä/ Harjunen 2017: 109).

Returning to the concept of body fluidity, trans/fat people seeking gender affirming surgery are frequently met with the request to first lose weight, which puts them into a position where they find themselves having to negotiate and prioritize between both identity parts (see Taylor 2021: 277). Hence, the argument for building on a fundamental ambiguity as a potential

solution for the theoretical divide between the fields is put forward (see White 2014: 95). Further potential common grounds between the respective fields are identified to be the engagement with non-normative embodiment, shared strategies to overcome legal barriers, the frequent use of queer theory in both fields (see *ibid.* 2014: 87f) and an orientation towards anti-oppressive goals (see *ibid.* 2021: 78).

Looking at the relation between fatness and disability, there have been more discussions and theorizing, especially around the question if fatness can be regarded as a disability (see Herdon 2021: 88). However, attempts to think the two together have been met with hesitations in both academic fields. While fat studies scholars are concerned about potential stigmatizing and pathologizing effects of an affiliation, disability studies researcher fear enhanced discrimination through common fatphobia (see *ibid.*: 95).

In addition, fat activists' endeavour to fight against the pathologization of fatness by claiming that it is not generally unhealthy, discourses of healthism are unintentionally aided, which can lead to further disconnection from disability studies (see Dolan 2018: 15). At the same time, fat studies researchers, such as Meleo-Erwin (2012), that trouble norms of health and embodiment and voice the demand that anyone should be protected from discrimination no matter the health status, create bridges for a shared understanding (see Taylor 2021: 277):

The belief in and strategy of normalizing those whose bodies are defined as physically and socially pathological is certainly not limited to the fat. Disability theorists and activists, for example, have extensively documented the cruelties inflicted upon those with cognitive, physical and psychiatric disabilities in the name of normalization (Meleo-Erwin 2012: 390f).

“Thus, in resisting the turn toward the respectability politics of health, scholars and activists are also embracing those who may not diet or exercise, the superfat, those who are ill, and disabled” (Herdon 2021: 95). Furthermore, several influential fat researchers like Cooper and Herdon themselves argue for understanding fatness in terms of a disability, since the experience of being fat in a fatphobic environment can be disabling (see Herdon 2021: 88). As Herdon elaborates in her article: “Cooper reaches this conclusion by charting out the multitude of ways that fat people are disabled by that ‘fat-hating culture’, including an analysis of defining features like physical spaces that do not work for larger bodies and employment-based discrimination” (*ibid.*: 89). Thereby the social model of disability is adapted to reframe fatness and can consequently be used as an important theoretical ground in both fields (see Cooper 2010: 1026).

2.3. Body Positivity, Fat Acceptance and Fat Activism

The field of fat studies emerged from earlier activism of fat people and is to this day closely connected and enmeshed with it. Pausé and Taylor compare their relationship to those of siblings, since both “epistemologies come forth through a shared necessity to understand and traverse a fat pathologizing society and in theory and practice humanize the fat body” (2021: 13). Research on fat activism as well as interconnected movements such as body positivity and fat acceptance is thereby not only done by scholars from fat studies but as well by researchers from feminist studies, psychology and public health among others. The following section will introduce and review this literature and give insights into how online spaces and in particular social media plays a role within the movements.

Starting with the latter, social media has been identified by various researchers to be a double-edged sword when it comes to active engagement with embodiment. On the one hand platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Instagram are places where diet culture (see (Jovanovski/ Jaeger 2022) and communities around ‘thinspiration’ and ‘fitspiration’ thrive (see Atherton 2021) and where not only mainstream narratives about beauty, health and bodies are constantly spread but also where people with non-normative bodies are often publicly ridiculed or face intense amounts of shaming and discrimination. On the other hand, they are vital sites for fat activism and social justice fights (see Zavattaro 2021: 282; Afful/Ricciardelli 2015: 458) and can be spaces to not just create wide spreading counter discourses but to find community, support, advice and collective organization (see Lupton 2017: 120). As Zavattaro further underlines: “In other words, when the physical world is cruel to fat bodies, people can reclaim their power in a digital realm by controlling the content and narrative” (2021: 282) and “turn to online spaces where they can assert their rights to exist” (ibid.: 296). Moreover, “[u]nlike traditional media consumption, social media users are both passive consumers and active creators of content. Social networking sites, like Instagram, have become one of the most dominant and influential mediums to cultivate awareness, foster online communities and advocate for social change at a global level” (Cohen et al. 2019: 48, after Kasana 2014). Hashtags thereby play a crucial role in connecting people across space and time and are becoming the basis for acting as a united force (see Snider 2021: 9).

Moving on to the literature that concerns itself with analysing the content of fat activism, the previous research that is to be found on the body positivity as well as on the fat acceptance movement is relatively small, fairly recent and surprisingly often in the form of a published master thesis or dissertation project (see Bahr 2018; Bolden 2016; Boyles 2017; Cox 2018;

Kirschling 2014; Otis 2017; Sastre 2016; Zhang 2021). Furthermore, while some authors explicitly analyse both movements together (see Lupton 2017; Morris 2019; Otis 2020) or attempt to look at fat activism as a whole (see Cooper 2016; Gurrieri 2013; Hynnä/ Kyrölä 2019; Haney/ Airbone/ Stiles 2021; Webb et al. 2017), others are either mainly concerned with body positivity (see Brathwaite/ DeAndrea 2021; Cohen et al. 2019; Cohen et al. 2021; Darwin/ Miller 2021; Johannsson 2021; Lazuka et al. 2020; Lebouf 2019; Rodgers et al. 2020; Streeter 2021; Zavattaro 2021) or with fat acceptance (see Afful/ Ricciardelli 2015; Striley/ Hutchens 2020) in their own right. More scholarship that my own search did not cover and a comprehensive account on the histories of fat activism, can additionally be found in Cooper's book *Fat Activism* (see 2016) and Pausé & Taylors chapter *Fattening up scholarship* (see 2021a). In the subsequent sections, crucial research findings will be elaborated upon structured around these respective movement categorisations.

“There are clear lines drawn between parts of fat activism and body positivity: whilst the former encourages a radical dismantling of oppressive structures, the latter views women as possessing the power for liberation” (Morris 2019: 172). Cohen et al. moreover demonstrates in their content analysis of body positive Instagram posts that the movement centres around the following themes: body appreciation, body acceptance/love, widening beauty standards, body and self-care, inner positivity and protective filtering of information (see 2019: 51). In line with this observation, Johannsson emphasizes in their analysis that a narrative from shame to pride and from self-hatred to self-acceptance is at the heart of body positivity discourse (see 2021: 118). In addition, the widening of beauty standards is aimed to be achieved through critiquing the ideals and expectations as well as through showing alleged body flaws in pictures and selfies as normal and beautiful (see *ibid.*: 119, 134). The central claim is that all bodies have value, a right to be positively visible and should be accepted (see *ibid.*: 114). “Hence, body positivity does not have the aim of changing one's body (its appearance or behaviour) but to transform the relation to and perception of one's body“ (*ibid.*: 119, after Sastre 2016).

Further Darwin and Miller reveal in their research that the movement is not only multi-faceted but deeply divided (see 2021: 885). They elaborate on four frames within the movement that coexist in tension with each other: Mainstream Body Positivity, Fat Positivity=Body Positivity, Radical Body Positivity and Body Neutrality (see *ibid.*: 874). While Mainstream Body Positivity is mainly concerned with the concept of self-love (see *ibid.*: 879), Fat Positivity=Body Positivity has the systematic discrimination of fat women at its core (see

ibid.: 880), Radical Body Positivity centres around various forms of systematic oppression of embodiment (see ibid.: 882) and Body Neutrality frames acceptance as the goal instead of love (see ibid.: 883). Looking at the Fat Positivity and Radical Body Positivity framing, there can definitely be an overlap seen with the fat acceptance movement.

Hence, Afful and Ricciardelli's research on the fat acceptance movement identifies that in line with body positivity, fat acceptance builds around improving body image and contesting body and beauty standards too, but finding community and emotional support as well as sharing experiences related to biomedicalization is beyond that central (see 2015: 458). Therefore, queer strategies are utilized, such as coming out as fat (see ibid.: 462), alternative forms of fat embodiment besides attractiveness and beauty are modelled and the economic marginalization of fat women is addressed (see ibid.: 453). Regularly upcoming themes are more informed by critical thought and theory and encompass for example the demedicalization of fatness, abolishment of the BMI and criticism of neoliberalism that demands self-responsibility and strict self-discipline (see ibid.: 456f). Additionally, the fat acceptance movement is a place where "rhetorical tools and political, as well as social, strategies to shift fat virtue discourses" (ibid.: 458) are developed. Nevertheless, which strategies and tools exist and how they are used in detail is understudied, but of concern for this thesis. Therefore, the empirical analysis of the related body liberation movement in this thesis aims to contribute to shed more light on this matter.

Lastly, in regards to academic writings on overarching fat activism, Charlotte Cooper's book *Fat Activism: a Radical Social Movement* is a recognized landmark (see 2016) and helps to further illustrate the knowledge about fat activism, while simultaneously complicating previous findings. In contrast to prior analysis of body positivity and fat acceptance, Cooper understands fat activism not as a "happy endeavour of self-acceptance and healthy living" (2016: Killjoy, para. 1) but as more complex, sophisticated and complicated. She argues that self-acceptance, body positivity, challenging stigma, campaigning for social change and debates about eating and health can merely be proxies for conceptualizing fat activism (see ibid.: Doing, para. 1). Furthermore, Cooper attests a lack of research from fat scholars on the topic and acknowledges this to be one of the reasons why foregoing literature often gives a limited account (see ibid.: Developing FA Research, para. 1). In her own analysis the concepts of power, agency, resistance (see ibid.: Foucault, power, social movements, para. 1-2) and access (see ibid.: Accessing) play a significant role.

Through her extensive research on the topic in collaboration with other fat activists, Cooper distinguishes five broad categories that can capture the various facets of the movement: 1) political process activism, 2) activist communities, 3) fat activism as cultural work, 4) micro fat activism and 5) ambiguous fat activism (see *ibid.*: This is FA, para. 4). Thereby *political process activism* is about public engagement in form of collective influence and public debate using the tools and processes of state power (see *ibid.*: Political Process FA, para. 1), while *community-building* is about growing social capital in terms of e.g. sharing information, developing new identities and interests, supporting each other and networking (see *ibid.*: Activist communities, para. 1-2). Moreover, *cultural work* centres around visibility and “refers to the act of making things: art, objects, events, still and moving images, digital artefacts, texts, spaces, places and so on” (*ibid.*: FA cultural work, para. 1) and *micro fat activism* “takes place in everyday spaces, is generally performed by one person [...] and happens in small, understated moments” (*ibid.*: Micro FA, para. 1-3) like e.g. bringing fat consciousness to conversations (*ibid.*: para. 7). Lastly, *ambiguous fat activism* captures all the other phenomena that exceed the previously mentioned (see *ibid.*: Ambiguous FA, para. 1).

In summary, Cooper understands fat activism “as a meta social movement because it exists on its own terms but it also offers clues about how other people in other social movements might approach social justice and transformation” (*ibid.*: A Meta Social Movement, para. 1) and states that it is allied with “other identity-based movements, particularly those that place the body centrally” (*ibid.*: FA is about eating disorders and body image, para. 4). Thus, this conceptualisation will be the main ground that informs my own understanding in the following chapters, since it captures the complexity of the movement to both a finer and more critical extent.

2.4. Solidarity, Coalition and Alliance Building

“Being an ally, an accomplice, or coconspirator in coalitional work, across differences, has been a central tenet of feminist theory and activism for decades” (Przybylo/ Fahs 2021: 297f). However, as shown in Gawerc’s literature review on factors, practices and processes that help coalition building across divides, there has been relatively little scholarship tracing how bridging differences and managing diversity can be effectively accomplished (see 2021: 3). Coalition is thereby being understood as “occur[ing] when distinct activist groups mutually agree to cooperate and work together towards a common goal” (*ibid.*, after McCammon/ Moon 2015: 326). Benefits of diverse coalitions are various: from broader-based mobilization, heightened visibility and additional legitimacy to fostering more effective

strategizing, increasing empathy, reducing repression and facilitating defection (see *ibid.*: 1). Searching for what is needed that alliances across differences work well, the previous research on the topic suggests that especially trust, commitment and a sense of solidarity need to be developed (see *ibid.*: 3). Other factors that are identified as important include a sense of shared objectives, social ties and bridge-builders, ongoing communication and interaction, an unifying identity (see *ibid.*), acknowledging privileges and inequalities (see *ibid.*: 6), attention to managing conflicts (see *ibid.*: 7) and confirmatory actions (see *ibid.*: 8).

While Gawerc defines solidarity in her research as “the ability of actors to recognize others and to be recognized, as belonging to the same social unit” (*ibid.*: 3, after Melucci 1996: 23), I would argue that the definition elaborated in Stewart’s and Schultze’s research on solidarity in social media activism proves more fruitful for this thesis (see 2019: 3). In their understanding, solidarity encompasses an “emotionally and normatively motivated readiness for mutual support, as in the slogan ‘one for all and all for one’” (*ibid.*, after Laitinen/ Pessi 2014: 1), that stresses action-readiness as well as a duty of assistance (see *ibid.*). Furthermore, they emphasize that human solidarity can exist and be exercised without a collective identity and that emotions are a crucial part of the process. Consequentially, alliance building can instead be grounded in affective attunement, which “represents not only the desire and ability to understand and respect another’s inner world, but also the matching of the other’s emotional state with affective expressions to achieve a level of inter-subjectivity where emotions are perceived as shared” (*ibid.*: 6, after Stern 1985).

In addition to focusing on common grounds and empathizing with each other’s experiences and struggles, Jones et al. propose in their article another strategy to handle differences within coalitions: reframing them as a strength (see 2020: 919). The concept they develop in their research is based on Mouffe’s and Butler’s theorizing and is called embodied agonistic solidarity, a practice that fosters collective agency through difference and conflict and is based on 1) exposing, 2) citing and 3) inhabiting (see *ibid.*: 918). “First, exposing means making one’s body open to the hardship of others, enabling alliances between unlikely allies to emerge. Second, citing denotes the drawing in of others’ symbolic resources and publicly affirming them. Third, inhabiting involves living through, in embodied and intimate ways, the deprivations of others, which strengthens solidarity and enables alliances to grow and persist” (*ibid.*). The concepts of embodied agonistic solidarity and of affective attunement are an important basis for the methodology of this thesis and later analysis that attempts to think people with separate identity categories together.

3. Theoretical Perspective

After having traced the state of research in the field(s) that are pivotal for this project, in this chapter the theoretical perspective is further elaborated on to lay the foundation for the subsequent analysis of the lived experience of abject bodies. In the first part the focus will lie on body normativity and oppression, while the two following sections will put forward theorization around visibility politics.

3.1. Body Normativity and Oppression

Looking at fundamental theorizing on embodiment, Jansen and Wehrle highlight that the body can be regarded as subject as well as object (see 2018: 37):

Human embodiment is characterized by an internal differentiation: I must be my body and, at the same time, have this body. [...] Thus, the lived body is not only actively performing its body schema, but is at the same time under the influence of external norms and structures, and thus a target for power, practices of discipline, and normalization. At the same time, the body as object is not merely passively, externally constructed, but also enables us to distance ourselves from ourselves and to critically evaluate our experiences (ibid.: 38f).

Taking this supposition as a basis, the political overseeing of fat bodies can be regarded as “part of a larger system of regulation [...] [where] fatness is used to maintain categories of difference that are informed through other systems of marginalization. As such, fat studies scholarship must be intersectional and must be rooted in the experiences of fat people” (Ioannoni 2020: 127). Agreeing with this point of view, exactly these oppressive systems will be engaged with further in the following by introducing the concept of intersectionality and theory on body norm, beauty ideals, ugliness and the abject body.

3.1.1. Intersectionality

“Intersectional feminist theory provides a particularly strong lens through which to understand Western denigration of fat and the body” (Farrell 2021: 48). Moreover, as Cooper Scholl underlines: “it is impossible to evaluate the historical and contemporary significance of fat in our culture without taking into account the intersections of fatphobia and other systems of oppression like sexism, racism, and classism” (Cooper Stoll 2019: 430). The concept of intersectionality originated in the US-American civil rights movement in the 1960s, where Black women fought against their multiple discrimination. In the academic context the term was coined by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (see 1991). Initially, intersectionality symbolized the metaphorical crossings of axes (intersections) alongside which people are discriminated against on the basis of race, class and gender. It is argued that these identity categories cannot be analysed in isolation since they create a complex experience of privilege

and oppression through their interplay. Through the further development of intersectionality over the years, scholars have used the concept not only as a theory, framework, politics and transdisciplinary research perspective (see Carbin/ Edenheim 2013: 234) but have added more categories of discrimination into their analysis such as ability, sexual orientation, age, religion and in the case of feminist fat studies: body size and shape amongst others. Hence, in terms of applied methodology, Leslie McCall has identified three common approaches: anticategorical complexity, intracategorical complexity and intercategory complexity. While categories are deconstructed in the anticategorical approach, the intracategorical one focuses on the various (discriminatory) experiences of people within a social group and intercategory complexity has a comparative analysis of multi-groups at its core. (see McCall 2005) In practice, much research does not neatly fit into just one of these categorisations but McCall's outline aids in getting a better understanding of the various uses. Yet, the shared ground of most intersectional research is no matter the disciplinary, methodological or content orientation the critical reflection of exclusions and interventions into hegemonial theories that are considered emancipative themselves. Moreover, as Prohaska and Gailey explain in their theorizing of fat oppression: "It is imperative to examine these relationships because of the qualitatively different ways that women, people of color, LGBTQ+, the working class and poor, differently abled, and non-Western and/or non-North American people, among others, experience fatness within particular legal and cultural contexts" (2019: 5). These respective intersecting systems of subordination will therefore be looked at in more detail in terms of normative embodiment in the next section.

3.1.2. Oppressive Body Norms

"The concept of normative corporality which I am proposing here refers to the artificial and cultural construction of rules relating to how corporality should be and how it should behave within an ableist system that privileges some bodies and abilities over others" (Bê 2019: 1339). Therefore, body norms can neither be regarded as natural nor as value-free (see Ioannoni 2020: 126f). As Meleo-Erwin shows in her genealogy of the normal and the pathological, the conceptualization of a norm shifted in the 19th century from meaning an average to "that which represents the proper way of life" (2012: 390). While the setting of a normal body simultaneously creates embodiment regarded as deviant, it gets evident as well that normativity has "a history, a set of investments, an entire array of supports and assumptions that bring it into being, sustain it and alter it when conditions so demand" (ibid., after Tremain 2008: XV). In addition, body norms did not only change over time but as well

vary across cultures (see Johnson 2018: 104; Ioannoni 2020: 126f). Furthermore, as Johnson stresses: “When it comes to body norms, we are probably as highly skilled at ‘norming’ the bodies of others as we are at ‘norming’ our own” (ibid.: 109). Looking at the Global North, the normative body is currently considered to be white, nondisabled, cisgender, marked as heterosexual, wealthy, middle-aged and slim (see Atherton 2021: 15; Taub et al. 2003: 160).

These outlined body features are highly consequential, since they are intertwined with a variety of cultural meanings, social hierarchies as well as earlier mentioned oppressive systems (see Johnson 2018: 109) and affect how people perceive themselves and treat other people’s bodies (see Bê 2019: 1336). In regards to norms around body size and shape, fatphobia is the underlying system that “identifies thinness with dignity, normalcy, desirability, and worthiness, and casts fat bodies as undignified, disgusting, socially threatening, and abject” (Atherton 2021: 1). It is thereby connected not only to healthism (see Ioannoni 2020: 126f) but also to ableism. “[A]bleism refers to the unquestioned and deep-seated belief that we – despite our innate fragility and mortality – can and should perfect our bodies, and that people with ‘abnormal’ bodies – whatever ‘abnormal’ means within the particular culture – do not qualify as fully human” (Dolan 2018: 14f) and are therefore ‘incapable’, ‘lesser than’ or ‘the Other’ (see Rice et al. 2021: 98). Moreover, fatness is increasingly associated with poverty and low social status as well as the moral opposite of the middle class body (see Hajunen 2017: 34f). As this intersects with further forms of marginalization, Atherton highlights another important observation:

The fatness of queer, black, disabled, trans, gender nonconforming, and working class bodies is socially imagined to indicate that queer, black, disabled, trans, gender nonconforming, and working class bodies are inherently undignified, excessive, lacking control, and unhealthy. And the idea that there is something inherently unhealthy or degenerate about queerness, disability, nonwhiteness, and being working class is further imagined to justify the denigration of fatness. Simplified, fat bodies are bad, and “bad” bodies are fat (ibid.: 16).

In line with this argument, Strings shows that historically, fatphobia has not been about health concerns but rather about legitimizing gender, class and race hierarchies (see 2019: 6). In terms of its intersection with racism, she reveals in her analysis that fat oppression is intertwined inseparably with and rooted in racial oppression: “The discourse of fatness as ‘coarse,’ ‘immoral,’ and ‘black’ worked to denigrate black women, and it concomitantly became the impetus for the promulgation of slender figures as the proper form of embodiment for elite white Christian women” (ibid.).

3.1.3. Neoliberal Beauty Ideals

“After years of studying beauty, I have discovered that when I start by looking closely at a beauty practice I always find my way to larger social structures” (Craig 2021: 7). What Craig points towards in this quote is that beauty ideals do not exist in a vacuum either and are similarly to body norms, informed through sexism, fatphobia, ableism, classism and racism. Additionally, they too are subject to change, culturally dependent and sometimes simultaneously competing with each other. Even though appearance surveillance is expanding to affect men too, the main pressure of beauty politics is still on women and trans and non-binary bodies (see Gill 2021: 11; Atherton 2021: 20). Moreover, “[a] beauty ideal, by definition, can be met only by a minority of [people], as its value depends on it being special and unusual; if too many [people] approach the ideal, then it must change in order to maintain its extraordinary perfection” (Chrisler 2012: 609). Nevertheless, as Gill highlights in her analysis, striving for this perfection and thereby achieving beauty and sexual attractiveness is within a sexist society not only demanded but advertised as the ultimate measurement of success, especially for women (see 2021: 11; Atherton 2021: 20). Appearance and the body are all highly gendered issues and beauty is a gendering practice (see Tischner 2013: 7). Furthermore, being perceived as attractive “carries with it a tremendous amount of privilege. Attractive people are frequently regarded as smarter, funnier, more capable, and nicer” (Gailey 2014: 137).

Central attributes that commonly define beauty in the West are body size and shape, skin tone and hair (see *ibid.*: 4), whereby “these ideals are measured along Eurocentric, white standards, meaning the narratives, images and ideals of ‘good bodies’ are heavily racialized” (Johansson 2021: 120). Within these white beauty standards, for women the body has to be thin and ideally hourglass shaped. Concerning the most desired skin tone (pale/light) and head hair (straight and long), colorism and texturism play a significant role even within marginalized communities (see Craig 2021: 6). Further, while head hair is demanded to be carefully and extensively nurtured and cherished, body hair has to be removed (see *ibid.*). These are by far not the only requirements and practices around achieving commonly viewed beauty but a deeper elaboration would exceed the scope of this thesis.

In addition, besides being fatphobic, sexist and racist, beauty standards are often ageist (see *ibid.*: 6) and health is frequently conflated with attractiveness (see Chrisler 2012: 611). As Cooper elaborates on the interconnection of healthism and beauty: “it is about presenting yourself to the world as glowingly well, athletic, able-bodied and full of vitality” (2016: Healthism and Disability, para. 1). What complicates the inaccessibility of these ideals even

further is that the economic status and class of people is often possible to be determined by their physical appearance, since financial and other resources are needed to take care of one's body and engage in beauty politics (see Harjunen 2017: 33). Moreover, beauty and disability share a complex interrelationship and have not only been seen as oppositional terms but historically depended on each other for definition (see Fox 2021: 147).

For achieving beauty ideals a neoliberal rational is thereby commonly employed, where personal responsibility as well as individualism are at the centre, while structural accounts of injustice are absent (see Gill 2021: 11). As Kwan and Graves explain: "if individuals are able to make their own choices and do so in an autonomous and rational manner, then they must deal with the consequences of their choices. This includes any choices they make about their bodies" (2013: 6). Thus, this neoliberal logic can be oppressive in two directions: on the one hand, it justifies the punishment of individuals that disobey body norms and beauty standards and on the other hand it blames people for their discontent with their bodies, since they "do it to themselves" (Gill 2021: 15). This illuminates further that "[t]hese norms and codes of behavior reach into the minute details of our bodies, thoughts, and behaviors" (Spade/ Willse 2015: 3). Hence, beauty is considered to be more than a merely superficial practice: it is highly political (see Craig 2021: 3). "In a world in which a focus on appearance is so dominant, the costs of non-compliance are amplified. This is felt disproportionately by some more than others – for example, trans rather than cis women, disabled rather than able-bodied women, fat rather than slim women" (Gill 2021: 14).

3.1.4. The Abject Body, Ugliness and Negative Emotions

Bodies that fall outside of what is considered to be normative embodiment, have been conceptualized in various ways, for example as deviant, non-normative, threatening or abject. Especially the oppression of fat people is often analysed through processes of abjection (see Atherton 2021: 18; Colls 2007: 360; Gailey 2014: 57; Lupton 2013: 58; Pfeffer 2021: 168; Kwan/ Graves 2013: 126), since the fat body subverts norms by resisting demanded discipline (see Gailey 2014: 79). Following Kristeva's theoretical understanding, bodies that do not respect borders, positions and rules and that disturb identities and systems are rendered abject as a way to contain the threat that their deviant existence is posing to the dominant order (see Atherton 2021: 18, Kristeva 1982: 4). As Butler states, the abject thereby indicates for others "the realm of 'I don't want to be that!'" (Gailey 2014: 57, after Butler 1993: 3). In terms of fatness, Colls expands on the connection to the abject as follows: "Fat does have similar qualities to those substances that are implicated in the processes of abjection; fat is evidence

of the body's capacities to extend beyond any established limits and that a body's boundaries are not stable for delimiting where the self begins and ends" (2007: 360). Consequentially, not only can bodily ambiguity and liminality be named as contributors for abjection to occur, but the inability to be made sense of through dominant categories leads to this state of socially invalid subjectivity as well (see *ibid.*: 19). "People with identities, bodies, and lives that are confusing or horrifying to dominant hierarchies are cast out into these spaces [of abjection]" (*ibid.*). Bodies frequently framed as abject are therefore not only the ones of fat people, but as well of people with disabilities and trans folks. Nevertheless, as Atherton further highlights, while thinness can seem like a promising way for white, heterosexual, nondisabled, cisgender and wealthy women to escape abjection, fatness is not the only barrier to a more privileged bodily existence:

Disabled bodies, even if thin, are still likely to be abject (and disabled people who resist abjection by insisting on their capacity to be happy are also often met with a moral panic and disgust similar to that generated in response to happy fat people). Visibly queer and gender nonconforming bodies, black and brown bodies, and bodies marked as poor are also at greater risk of abjection. Losing weight or maintaining thinness only promises valid social subjectivity to some (2021: 21).

On top of that, as pointed to in this quote, negative emotions such as disgust, fear and shame play a significant role within the process. Lupton argues that through the transgression of bodily norms, the lack of definition and the liminal status feelings of revulsion and fear of contamination emerge: "The abject is an external menace, something from which we must protect ourselves, but there is also a sense that it is somehow contained within us, and must be expelled from oneself to achieve integrity of the body. Disgust is generated by this dual response to the external and internal threat, to the idea that the abject might be contained within the self" (2013: 58). Engaging with the lived experience of non-normative bodies through the analytical lens of abjection can therefore be especially insightful.

Likewise, the equivalent attribution for people that cannot or do not want to meet the previously elaborated beauty standards is ugliness. As a concept, it has not been theorized much within research (see Fahs 2018: 238), whereas it is used widely in everyday life as a disciplinary practice around embodiment. Breaching codes of behaviour, attention and appearance by either disregarding them, mimicking them improperly or being in excess of them is often labelled as ugly, followed by punishment through this marking (see Przybylo/Rodrigues 2018: 8, 16). Thereby, ugliness is not an attribute of bodies and there is no inherently 'ugly body', since this evaluation solely emerges through social interaction and hierarchical comparison of bodies. Rather, "[u]gliness is most often used pejoratively and against disenfranchised groups and individuals, and it is used to communicate not simply a

quality among others but a moral failing, an absence of value in the predominant social order” (ibid.). As Fahs stresses in her analysis, it is a deeply political framework that enables individuals to produce social biases and aversion for others “while also reinforcing internalized forms of oppression” (2018: 249). Like the concept of beauty, ugliness too is political since it is intertwined with the systems surrounding gender, ability, health, class, sexuality, age and race and is connected to other concepts like ‘monstrosity’ and ‘dirt’ (see Przybylo/ Rodrigues 2018: 4). Also, “[t]he histories that equate racialized bodies with ugliness and ugliness with racialization are so complex that it would be fair to argue that ugliness is a concept thoroughly reliant on racism for meaning” (ibid.: 9). Furthermore, in their research on the politics of ugliness Fahs highlights the importance of negative emotions in conjunction to the concept, such as disgust, fear, dread, loathing, anger, embarrassment, shame, hesitation and sadness (see 2018: 250). In line with this, Przybylo and Rodrigues argue:

Ugliness is indicative of a broader affective disposition that cannot be solely distilled down to dirtiness or waste. We can refer to this affective disposition as ‘visual injustice’ – a system of discrimination that relies on the politics of appearance and visibility to render and deny privilege, access, and resources, including power, money, work, and love. Similarly, the process of thinking about abjection, disgust, and revolt is less about thinking ugliness than it is about visceral reactions to ugliness (2018: 5).

In consequence, engaging with ugliness can aid to understand how daily interactions and systems of representation operate in unity or in opposition to body norms and beauty ideals (see ibid.: 16) and how appearance surveillance is highly interwoven with visibility politics.

3.2. The Power of Visibility

“Visibility is intimately related to acknowledgment or recognition” (Gailey 2014: 9). Through appearance, bodies signal their situated identities to others without the utterance of words and depending on how their social markers intersect as well as which cultural meanings are available for interpretation, assumptions are made about the person (see ibid.: 8). “Looking is not indifferent. There can never be any question of ‘just looking’” (Tischner 2013: 44, after Burgin 1982). And as Gill illustrates in her account on different ‘ways of seeing’, practices of looking are various and changing over time. In her example regarding beauty procedures, she notes how in comparison to the younger generation, her ‘glance’ is less intense, more benign and blurry, whereby this is not related to eyesight but to cultural effects (see 2021: 14). Furthermore, as Gailey argues in reference to Goffman’s theorization, social interactions in terms of visibility involve an “artistic mix of observing others, appearing to ignore others, and acknowledging others intermittently, without obtrusive intensity” (ibid.: 11). The

motivation behind this endeavour is to be acknowledged in the right way by seeking recognition for good things and avoiding to draw negative attention (see *ibid.*). As a consequence, visibility can be understood as a social process and the result of what we see is socially and interactionally constructed (see Tischner 2013: 44). Visibility thereby holds power, not only in social interactions but in terms of knowledge production as well. Additionally, “[t]he right to be seen – and the right to be recognized – is thus inevitably coded as a fundamental human right in the contemporary West” (Johansson 2021: 117f, after Sastre 2016: 27). The following section will therefore present general aspects of social visibility and invisibility, engage with visibility as a tool of oppression and introduce the concept of hyper(in)visibility.

3.2.1. Being Visible/ Invisible

“There is a complex relationship between power and visibility [...]. In some instances, being seen signifies respect as discussed before, but when being seen results in stares of disapproval, the act of being seen is Othering” (Gailey 2014: 9f). Visibility and invisibility are understood to be ‘dialectically inseparable’ and all people move in and out of being seen and not being seen at one time or another (see *ibid.*: 18). Nevertheless, depending on where one’s body is located in terms of body norms and beauty ideals, visibility as well as invisibility can occur for people in quite dissimilar situations, with different frequencies and lead to either negative or positive experiences. In other words, ‘visibility is a double-edged sword’ (see Tischner 2013: 52, after Brighenti 2007: 335) and functions as a motivator to take part in beauty practices. Looking more closely at the connection between normative embodiment and social visibility, this argument gets clearer. When bodies are for example in line with body *and* beauty norms, they can access various privileges of positive visibility like being exceptionally cared for, seen and listened to if so wished. In comparison, bodies that do not meet beauty ideals without violating body norms, are less positively visible but at the same time they can still benefit from positive invisibility and for instance pass unnoticed in social situations or enjoy a crowd’s anonymity. This stands in harsh contrast to bodies that cannot or do not meet either of the norms. Their experience is mainly marked through negative visibility and negative invisibility: “Marginalized bodies are not just seen or acknowledged; they are dissected and overtly made into a spectacle. Similarly, marginalized bodies are not simply invisible – that is, easily moving through social situations without too much attention or unwarranted inspection – but also erased and entirely dismissed” (Gailey 2014: 12).

3.2.2. Visibility as a Tool for Oppression

Drawing on Foucault's work, visibility, in accordance to its interconnection with power, can be understood in terms of enabling surveillance, discipline and oppression. Using Bentham's concept of the Panopticon, Foucault displays how being constantly visible and therefore potentially always watched results in mechanisms of self-disciplining around meeting imposed appearance and behavioural norms to avoid judgement as well as punishment (see Tischner 2013: 45). "Due to the pervasive rules set out by overarching social norms and structures, we survey ourselves until 'conscious compliance gradually becomes habitual'" (Morris 2019: 58f, after Prado 2003: 166).

Thus, as Threadcraft highlights, using Foucault's account of power in terms of self-surveillance can help to explain why most women engage this thoroughly with time-consuming, tiresome, expensive and sometimes even painful bodily practices (see 2015: 13). While bodies become self-policing subjects, the reason behind it often stays hidden and makes these beauty practices appear voluntary and natural instead (see *ibid.*). An especially strong driving force has been uncovered in Fahs research: the fear of ugliness. More than striving to be beautiful and therefore gaining privileges, women try to avoid 'being ugly' or 'getting ugly' and the retributions that follow this labelling (see 2018: 238). An "imagined embodiment (that is, 'What will I or could I become?)" (*ibid.*: 248) is therefore as crucial as the current bodily status.

But, as anticolonial feminists have argued, alongside this internalization of appearance demands, norms are still also violently enforced through institutions such as medicine and education (see Spade/ Willse 2015: 3, after Stoler 1995, 2002; Chow 2002; Spivak 1988). Furthermore, through the means of visibility people not only relentlessly scrutinize themselves but as well each other's bodies "with a range of gazes that may be anxious, desiring, envious, appreciative, or hostile" (Gill 2021: 11f). This surveillance can be described as 'horizontal', 'peer' or 'intra-group' surveillance and has been termed the 'girlfriend gaze' when it comes to women policing each other's looks (see *ibid.*: 13), whereby stares and vocal shaming are the most commonly used disciplinary technique in such social interactions (see Meleo-Erwin 2012: 392). In summary, "[a]ll bodies are subject to surveillance, but some bodies are watched more closely while other bodies disappear or seemingly vanish" (Gailey 2014: 10). Marginalized people that are fat, trans or disabled thereby belong to the first group and their experience in terms of visibility should consequentially be paid particular attention to.

3.2.3. Hyper(in)visibility of the Abject Body

A concept that is in line with the previously introduced research and can additionally capture the specificity of abject bodies' lived experience in an oppressive surrounding, is what Jeannie Gailey terms hyper(in)visibility. "To be hyper(in)visible means that a person is sometimes paid exceptional attention and is sometimes exceptionally overlooked, and it can happen simultaneously" (2014: 19). People with marginalized bodies are thereby often hyperinvisible in the sense that their desires, lived experiences, subjectivities and needs are disregarded while at the same time hypervisible, since their bodies are under heightened surveillance, criticism and judgement (see *ibid.*). As Gailey further elaborates:

Marginalized or "visually obtrusive bodies" typically become visible at inopportune times. Authorities might target them, or their immediate presence can draw stares or looks of disgust when they ask to have their needs accommodated. While socially invisible, they remain symbolically crucial (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2004). As crucial symbolic figures – such as persons of color, queer persons, disabled persons, and fat persons – they experience, simultaneously, deprivation of recognition and surplus attention (*ibid.*: 10).

So while abject bodies inevitable and constantly stick out in social settings and therefore cannot or rarely experience positive invisibility, the extensive oppression they face through violating body norms is inconceivably unseen, commonly unheard of and uncared for in comparison to the tremendous consequences it can have on their lives. Their social visibility as well as their social invisibility in dominant culture is therefore both times frequently a highly negative experience. Consequentially, Gailey argues that the prefix 'hyper' is necessary to adequately account for this paradoxical phenomenon (see *ibid.*: 8, 12, 166).

Interrogating incidents where fat people experience hyper(in)visibility, medical and healthcare settings as well as issues regarding eating, exercise and clothing are frequently named by Gailey's participants: "Fat women are typically hypervisible when eating in public, shopping at the grocery store, or exercising at the gym. They are rendered hyperinvisible when they exhibit disordered eating behaviors for weight loss and as consumers of exercise clothing and accessories" (2014: 27). On top of that, when doctors assume any of their health problems are a result of body size and render fat people's knowledge of their bodies and symptoms invisible, hyper(in)visibility is reinforced (see *ibid.*: 18). Fatness is thereby impossible to be masked and the fat body cannot be hidden (see Ioannoni 2020: 131). In our current society it functions "as both an incredibly visible marker thought to indicate someone's moral character and health status but also a trait not to be acknowledged as important enough to be worthy of protections" (Herdon 2021: 96).

While Gailey focuses mainly on fatness in her book about hyper(in)visibility, she acknowledges in the conclusion, that this concept can be useful for theorizing other subjugated groups, such as:

People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer experience hyper(in)visibility, [...], those with disabilities or physical differences, and those who engage in extreme body modification. I contend that this concept has extensive applicability to marginalized bodies and groups and provides a framework to analyze both the structural aspects of oppression and denigration and the experiential aspects associated with the internalization of a marginalized status (ibid.: 168).

It is therefore a useful concept to think through and theorize the lived experience of fat, disabled and trans people together in terms of visibility politics and will be further applied in the following analysis.

4. Methodology

Concerning the methodology of the thesis, the concept of situated knowledge by Haraway is of centrality. It is based on the epistemological understanding, that every knowledge production is always situated and researchers can only ever have an embodied, partial perspective and located knowledge about the world. Through the acknowledgment of ones limited location and situated knowledge as a scholar, responsible, accountable and even objective research becomes possible (see Engelstad/ Gerrard 2005: 3). As I build on these assumptions in my thesis, I am in line with Haraway's argumentation "for a doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing. But not just any partial perspective will do; we must be hostile to easy relativisms and holisms built out of summing and subsuming parts" (1988: 585). The latter aspect thereby links to this project's aim of utilizing the concept of intersectionality both as a theory to understand body normativity and as a research perspective whenever lived experience of abject bodies are analysed (see Harjunen 2017: 16). This means that people's experiences are considered to be dependent on their individual positionality and that the data will be interpreted through an intersectional lens.

Additionally, Haraway stresses self-reflection and positioning as key practices in grounding knowledge (see ibid.: 587) and states that situated knowledge requires that the object of knowledge is pictured as an actor and agent (see ibid.: 592). "She also emphasises that there are good reasons to believe that vision is better from below. But how to see from below, requires skills" (Brenna 2005: 38). These are further prerequisites that are of importance for analysing the ways in which people within the body liberation movement struggle against the

hyper(in)visibility of their abject bodies. The experience shared by them will be regarded as expert knowledge on their lives. Similarly to Pausé and Cooper, I will maintain “the imperative that epistemology derived from fat people’s own experience must be taken seriously in order to know about fat and change how knowledge and power are currently used against fat people” (Cooper 2016: Standpoint, para. 2, after Pausé 2012).

Nevertheless, in her approach Haraway “seems less concerned with power and gender within and between other situated knowledges. Neither does she elaborate on the almost universal dominance of Western science when in conversation with other situated knowledges, nor consider the difficulties non-Western scholars face in almost all phases of producing knowledges” (Engelstad/ Gerrard 2005: 21). This is where Spivak’s critical postcolonial approach shall complement the concept of situated knowledge, since it not only highlights the violent Western production of ‘the Other of Europe’ but elucidates on the influence of white supremacy and imperialism to other situated knowledges. Furthermore, Spivak sheds light on the importance of always interrogating what has not been said in knowledge production, which functions as an entry point into looking at exclusions within the body liberation movement. She refers to this as ‘the task of measuring silences’ (see Spivak 1988: 82). This aspect can be connected back to the theory on (in)visibility. While being visible or invisible is certainly of importance for people’s lived experience in regards to social interactions, politics of visibility play an equally important role within the processes of knowledge production. In line with various other decolonial methodologies (see Barnes 2018: 382), the aim is therefore to give voice to the most marginalised within the movement and to counteract the exclusion of their subjugated knowledge within academia.

Moreover, all accounts on abject embodiment will be approached through the lens of Alexandre Baril composite model of disability (see 2015). It shares common ground with the social model of disability in terms of distinguishing impairment from disability and in addressing ableist oppression as a main cause for disabling living conditions (see Shakespeare 2017: 197). Likewise it follows the tradition of problematizing persisting discourses around individual ‘defectiveness’ and ‘deficiency’ and highlights the importance of removing disabling barriers. Though, unlike in the social model, the composite model recognizes that impairment through physical or mental/psychological conditions can be a source of suffering for people with disabilities as well (see Baril 2015: 60). While Baril uses this approach to think through his lived experience as a disabled trans man within his autoethnographical analysis, such an approach is useful when engaging with fat embodiment too. As Clare reminds us:

Sometimes we who are activists and thinkers forget about our bodies, ignore our bodies, or reframe our bodies to fit our theories and political strategies [...]. But in defining the external, collective, material nature of social injustice as separate from the body, we have sometimes ended up sidelining the profound relationships that connect our bodies with who we are and how we experience oppression (2018: 95).

Approaching the data from the composite model of disability therefore enables a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of abject bodies and keeps aspects of felt embodiment close.

5. Positionality and Ethics

In line with the methodological approach of this thesis, the following paragraph will focus on my situatedness as a researcher and elaborate further on the pursued ethics. Looking at the intersections that I inhabit and my interest in the body liberation movement, my personal connections towards the topic are not obvious at first sight: being a white, middle-class, able-bodied, cisgender woman with a current weight classified on the high end of normal. Even though I up to this point neither identify as trans nor disabled, I regularly suffer from mental health struggles and chronic pain myself (whereby either can be quite disabling at times) and express my gender in a rather non-normative way for a white and straight woman. This makes me not only relate to both communities but also wonder why I have rarely read about their intersections before. Additionally thinking about the history as well as the present of my own lived experience in my body in terms of size and shape, several forming moments come to my mind. The first being about body shaming, bullying and stigmatisation mainly at school in my childhood and early teenage years, because I was 'overweight'. Another one is as I grew older when I started struggling with severe body image issues and disordered eating, while engaging with diet culture and the expected beauty standards. Having forcefully lost a big amount of weight at that time, I thus learnt what it means to benefit from thin privilege and what it costs to maintain it if you don't 'naturally' fall into that category. And then the last I want to name here: finally discovering counter discourses, knowledge around oppressive structures surrounding embodiment and body positive activism as a young adult that gave me tools to help understand my own experience, unlearn harmful socialisation, heal and embrace 'ugly' and non-normative ways of embodiment.

So while I have a personal stake within the body liberation movement and have been an active follower in the online community for several years now, I want to acknowledge the privileges and the limitations that come with my positionality. Furthermore, I am aware of the discussions within the fat activist and research community about non-fat people academically

engaging with the topic (see Lupton 2013; Cooper 2016; Pausé/ Taylor 2021) and agree with Cooper and Pausé that “fat people know the most about being fat people” (Pausé/ Taylor 2021: 11). The same goes without saying for people with disabilities and trans people. Consequentially, within this thesis and especially in its empirical part, I want to honour the disability rights slogan “Nothing about us without us” (Snider 2021: 6) as well as fat and trans activists equivalent demands, by always prioritising the citation of people with lived experience, aiming to centre the voices of the most marginalized and by approaching the analysis in line with the concept of affective attunement and from an empathic standpoint (see Stewart/ Schultze 2019: 6).

“Ethics considerations and guidelines play a very important role in the quality and implementation of research, and in how research findings can be used in a responsible manner to develop our society” (Vetenskapsrådet 2017: 2). As a feminist scholar I highly agree with the former statement and argue that gender studies is a political endeavour and we are ought to contribute to transformative and radical social justice (see Harris/ Patton 2019: 348). To further elaborate this standpoint, I want to recall Audre Lorde famous quote: “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own” (1987: 6). In line with the concept of research justice outlined by Cooper, I am not only committed to an ethical practice but as well to harm minimisation in any way possible (see 2016: 46).

Reflecting on further research limitations, the collected data being restricted to my English and German speaking/reading skills excludes untranslated contributions to the body liberation movement from other languages. Moreover, since I did not conduct empirical material like interviews, participatory observation or surveys myself, my research is limited to knowledge that has already been publicly shared and it thus makes a more dialogical interaction impossible.

6. Method

In the following section, the sampling approach and process of data collection will be introduced, an overview of the retrieved data will be given and the applied method of analysis will be elucidated. In conjunction with the theoretical framework and methodology, this serves as the basis for the following analysis.

6.1. Data Collection and Sample

In terms of collecting empirical material from the body liberation movement, the choice was made to use a range of secondary sources like chapters from activist books, Instagram, blogs

and YouTube videos in order to capture a broad variety of shared knowledge. Instagram was selected over other social media sites like Tumblr or Facebook, because most of the current movement is located there and I am immersed in this part of the online community myself. "Such secondary sources are valuable because we can access people's experiences and perspectives without shaping their responses through our data collection questions and methods" (Braun/ Clarke 2019: 153). Moreover, they are suitable to address the type of research question posed in this thesis.

"Another advantage is that secondary sources sidestep some ethical concerns because you do not directly interact with participants to generate data" (ibid.: 155). Nevertheless, as Braun and Clarke highlight in their discussion on ethical considerations with online secondary sources, questions of consent, privacy, and vulnerability have to be thought about. In the case of the data that I have collected from Instagram and blog posts, I argue that no consent was needed because it is publicly shared by people that intend to reach a wide audience with their personal experience and knowledge. A concern surfacing during the process was rather that people repeatedly stated how passive consumption of their educational content on Instagram without paying for their labour is problematic. Due to no financial resources for this master thesis, I decided to credit their labour by stating their full name within the analysis and created a list with further information about their work that can be found in the appendix (see Appendix 3).

Following Braun and Clarke's qualitative research guide, a plan and rationale was formulated for the sampling and collection of the secondary data (see 2019: 155) and a record list with an ID code for each item was produced (see Appendix 2). The recommended amount of secondary data for a small project was named be one to 100 (see Braun/ Clarke 2019: 49), while I aimed at the middle of this range to "have enough data to tell a rich story, but not too much that it precludes deep, complex engagement with the data in the time available" (ibid.: 56). The sampling approach was chosen to be purposive and the sampling aims were diversity of perspectives, snowballing and typicality of perspectives (see ibid.). This provides both information rich data and is in line with approaches within previous research on the topic (see Afful/ Ricciardelli 2015: 459).

The inclusion criteria were centred on three aspects: the person's identity characteristics, their content and the language used. The person had to be at least midfat (see Fluffy Kitten Party 2021), be actively anti-fatphobic (see Afful/ Ricciardelli 2015: 459) and inhabit another highly marginalized identity (e.g. BIPOC, trans, queer, disabled) or be well-know/influential in the movement. Moreover, the content of their blog, Instagram post, book chapter or video

had to be primarily in English (see Cohen et al. 2019: 49) and relate to the body liberation movement (see Afful/ Ricciardelli 2015: 459). Regarding the latter criterion, given there is no universally accepted meaning of body liberation, the employed definition was modelled after the ones put forth by Lindley Ashline, Jes Baker and Patrilie Hernandez (see Ashline n.d.; Baker 2020; Hernandez n.d.). In contrast, data was excluded when the predominant focus was not on the body liberation movement and when the main occupation was fashion influencer or model. Additionally, Instagram posts were excluded when they 1) were older than 2 years, 2) had little to no captions or the picture/ video was the sole statement, 3) were about direct conflicts with other activists/influencer, 4) contained advertisement or promotions of e.g. books or local events or 5) were reposts of other people's content (unless the account was meant to be representative of the community).

To acquire a sample frame of the body liberation movement, first the term "body liberation" movement' was entered into the most used online search engine Google. This primary strategy aligns with former research (see Cohen et al. 2019: 49). The search was conducted in June 2022 from my own computer. As displayed on the first page of the Google search (see Appendix 1), the video *So You Want to Fight for Body Liberation. Now What* (see V_3, Hersh/ Lucas 2020) as well as the blogpost *Why I've Chosen Body Liberation Over Body Love* (see B_jb_1, Baker 2020) were directly chosen as material because of their popularity. The website *Body Liberation Series* (see UCLA Rise Center n.d.) and their listed resources were partly used for further snowballing and partly as data. Therefrom the video *Lose Hate Not Weight* (see V_1, Tovar 2017), the book *Belly of The Beast* (Bo_dslh_1-Bo_dslh_2, Harrison 2021) and the book *Things No One Will Tell Fat Girls* (Bo_jb_1-Bo_jb_5, Baker 2015) were picked. The selection of the book chapters followed in line with the methodology the aim to centre most marginalized voices and topics. Moreover, 'body liberation' was entered into YouTube and the video *Bodies as Resistance* (see V_1, Taylor 2017) was collected from the first page. In the light of snowballing for Instagram accounts, the blog *Bodyliberationphotos* displayed on Google search's first page was used. One of their blogposts listed 40+ large fat people on Instagram (see Ashline 2021), while another shared a twitter post (see Ashline n.d.) that stated must-reads for beginners interested in body liberation (see Mercedes 2022). In addition, '#bodyliberationmovement' was entered into the search bar of Instagram and under the top ten posts, one was selected that referenced famous Black fat activists which aided in further diversifying the sample. By going through each of the initially snowballed Instagram accounts and applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria,

the final selection was achieved. Lastly, the collection of the posts was conducted as follows: From the most recent post backwards until five posts were reached per account or until no criteria fitting post came up regularly for another 10 posts. This strategy was chosen, because my primary interest was to do contemporary research instead of looking at it from a more historical perspective.

In total, the final sample encompasses 60 posts from 18 Instagram accounts, two posts from one blog, three videos from YouTube and eight chapters from two activist's books. Looking at the identity characteristics of the 27 people within the data, they are distributed as follows: gender (women= 15, trans/ non-binary= 11, not clear= 1), race (Black= 12, poc= 3, white= 11, not clear= 1), dis/ability (disabled= 4, neurodivergent= 3, not clear= 20), sexuality (queer= 8, bisexual= 2, not clear= 17) and religion (Muslim= 1, Jewish= 1, not clear= 25). In summary, while the typicality of perspectives was paid attention to and snowballing was used within the sampling process, the aim for a diversity of perspectives was mainly focused on during the final selection which is mirrored in the above data overview.

6.2. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The chosen tool for analysing this data is the reflexive thematic analysis after Braun and Clarke (2019), because of its flexibility regarding compatible theoretical, epistemological and ontological frameworks, applicability for student projects (see *ibid.*: 178) and suitability for answering research questions that are concerned with the lived experience of people (see *ibid.*: 45). While reflexive thematic analysis is solely a method for data analysis and does not have an inbuilt methodology or prescribes methods of data collection, it cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum (see *ibid.* 2021: 337f). The previously stated epistemological assumptions within the methodology section of this thesis are therefore a crucial foundation for this methods application. Employing situated knowledge is in line with Braun and Clarke's understanding of the researcher's role within the analysis. Thus, interpreting data is considered to be an active endeavour influenced by ones positionality and even though participant's voices are edited and evoked, the story that is told about the data is the one from the scholar: "Our language use is never neutral, even in apparently descriptive reporting" (*ibid.*: 339).

Regarding the data engagement as well as the coding and theme development, I worked in accordance with Braun and Clarke's most recent outline of doing reflexive thematic analysis which encompasses the following six-phase process: "1) data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes; 2) systematic data coding; 3) generating initial themes from coded and

collated data; 4) developing and reviewing themes; 5) refining, defining and naming themes; and 6) writing the report” (ibid.: 331). Since these are rather general steps and each of them can be implemented in various ways, my concrete coding practices and approaches to theme development will be explained in more detail.

After having transcribed all videos as well as textual statements on the pictures of Instagram posts, I continued to familiarise myself with the data through repeated critical reading of the transcripts and took notes of initial thoughts in my research diary. I approached the second step of systematically coding the data inductively and used the QDA software Atlas.ti to do so. To balance out the differences in secondary sources concerning the amount of information, video transcripts and blog/Instagram posts were openly and completely in-vivo coded in a first round, while the book chapters were coded selectively with the same codes in a second round. The process of complete coding had the aim to highlight everything that was of potential relevance to answering the research question (see ibid. 2019: 206f), whereas the selective coding followed the purpose of both identifying further instances of already mentioned phenomena and data reduction (see ibid.: 209).

“Within reflexive TA, the coding process is integral to theme development, in the sense that themes are an ‘outcome’ of these coding and theme development processes, are developed through coding” (ibid. 2021: 332). Following this understanding, I engaged more deeply with the initial results of coding as well as the collated data and started to continuously rework, restructure and at times merge together the semantic codes whereby more and more latent codes were formed. The latter were then used as a basis for generating initial themes and identifying reoccurring topics in the data. This was achieved by returning to rereading the quotes, searching for potential common concepts within the data and grouping latent codes together that seemed to share a connection. The theme building was mainly done in a data-driven and bottom-up way (see ibid. 2019: 178). Complementary, engaging with the previous scholarship on fat activism once more at a later stage in the process aided in further organising the many codes and in deciding on where to shift the focus to in terms of research gaps. In the fifth step of developing and reviewing themes, subthemes were created and codes were regrouped accordingly while some were removed completely due to the necessity of reduction and clarity. The last two phases of refining, defining and naming themes and writing the report were overlapping and I went back and forth between the two, since as Braun and Clarke explain: “You cannot really do qualitative analysis without writing it. You can have insights and thoughts, but you can’t complete your analysis of the data and then write it up, because qualitative analysis is writing” (ibid.: 249). The selection of extracts was

thereby crucial to completing both steps. Moreover, in the final analysis, quotes were decided to be mainly used as illustrative examples rather than as a basis for interpretative claims to “closely tell the ‘story of the data’” (ibid.: 252).

7. Fighting against Hyper(in)visibility as a Community

We need more research on how fat women manage stigma and how they cope with the stress that prejudice and discrimination produce (Fikkan and Rothblum 2011). We also need more research on how fat women come to resist sociocultural pressures to conform to conventional beauty standards, reject the idea that their bodies are dangerous or unhealthy, and learn to accept themselves as they are (McKinley 2011). We need to study fat women’s lived experience in order to understand the positive aspects of their lives rather than assuming that the negative aspects are all there is (Chrisler 2012: 614).

Analysing how people within the body liberation movement engage with their lived experience of hyper(in)visibility and which strategies they use to struggle against it, the following four themes were generated from the collected data that can address some of these research gaps outlined by Chrisler: 1) knowledge production on power structures, 2) mental health is health, 3) fat resistance and 4) solidarity and allyship. These will be presented in detail together with each of their subthemes in the subsequent chapter. The wording of ‘fighting’ is thereby the most commonly used in their accounts and gives first insight into how people with abject bodies often perceive the situation they are living in: as a constant fight not only against the consequences of their oppression but as well as against the oppressive structures themselves. Furthermore, this choice of wording can be interpreted as a reaction to the language used in dominant discourse which frequently evokes notions of a ‘obesity epidemic’ and a metaphorical ‘war against obesity’ (see Cooper 2010: 1002). Additionally, another reoccurring topic is the criticism about the limits of body positivity and self-love narratives within and outside of the movement that once more underline the previous aspect: oppression cannot just be internally ‘loved away’. Strategies that go beyond this narrow understanding have therefore been developed by the people and will be elaborated on within each respective theme below.

7.1. Knowledge Production on Power Structures

While engaging with the various voices of people on Instagram, as well as within the selected YouTube videos and book chapters, an overarching key theme that was identified repeatedly and throughout them all is education as a strategy to address and struggle against hyper(in)visibility. As body liberation activist Gloria Lucas highlights in her conversation with YouTube host Tessa Hersh: “In many ways, social media has been an educational tool” (V_3, Lucas 2020: 04:19 min). Sometimes more implicitly through displaying for example

counter discursive actions and other times more explicit in form of active knowledge production on power structures, which will be the first theme introduced within this analysis. The assumptions behind why creating and sharing critical knowledge from the lived experience of abject bodies is of importance for the aimed at struggle becomes more clear through Da'Shaun Harrison's statement: "For us to inch toward a tomorrow not limited by the confines of today, we have to interrogate the structures that actively marginalize our bodies and beings, and we have to destroy all that is attached to those structures" (Bo_dslh_1, Harrison 2021: 8). The idea is that through problematizing and criticising oppression, the power structures that lead to hypervisibility of abject bodies in the first place can be directly targeted and aimed to be eliminated better in hopes of preventing the process of abjection altogether. By sharing insights into daily lives as part of an oppositional knowledge production, the otherwise hyperinvisibility of lived experiences gets challenged. Consequentially, the main subthemes are 1) education on fatphobia and body diversity and 2) sharing intersectional experiences.

7.1.1. Education on Fatphobia and Body Diversity

Very frequently, posts, texts and videos are in one way or another about critical knowledge production on fatphobia, anti-fatness or fat hatred, whereby incidents of abuse, discrimination and lack of access among others are linked to the latter. As Joy Cox elaborates in her post on the different dimensions of fatphobia, anti-fat bias can be experienced within oneself, in interaction with others or structurally:

Systemic: e.g. discrimination in employment, healthcare, education, lack of physical accommodation.

Interpersonal: e.g. comments about our bodies or what we are eating.

Internalized: e.g. judging ourselves, bodies dissatisfaction, restrictive or self-harming behaviours.

While people of all sizes can experience internalized weight stigma, only the largest among us face systemic fatphobia (I_fotc_3, @freshoutthecocoon 2021).

Connected to this aspect, society's teachings on embodiment that put fatness into abjection are frequently addressed too, whereby mostly the social construction behind framing fat as unfit, wrong, unsexy, undesirable, ridiculous, inferior or internal monstrosity is confronted. It is highlighted how these associations result in a demand for fat people to either conform to the body norms by changing their bodies through following popular slogans such as 'exercise more and eat less' or to perform as expected for an abject body by hiding and for example wearing black, no patterned and shapeless garments and long hair. The pressure of body performance and conformity are thus regularly named issues. As discussed in Taub et al.'s research with women with physical disabilities, this approach to address issues can be

understood as the strategy of normalization, which is part of stigma management (see 2003: 170): “Stigmatized individuals may engage in normalisation when strategies of concealment and deflection are not practical” (ibid., after Elliot et al. 1990). Choosing to confront body norms and discrimination directly as well as engaging in re-education can in its most optimal outcome rid discrediting attributes of their stigmatizing quality (see ibid.). As a result the conflation between worth, beauty and health is unravelled and rejected. Complementing this method, the vast natural variation in body sizes, shapes and abilities is underlined as well as the fact that bodies are naturally changing whether through for example weight gain/loss, aging, childbirth, sickness or acquired disability. Fundamental instability and vulnerability of bodies is regarded to be part of everyone’s corporeality. As Robin Zabiegalski further adds: “Bodies change for lots of different reasons, most of which you can’t guess just by looking at a person” (I_blr_1, @Body.lib.robinhood 2022).

Furthermore, the constant insistence on losing weight is seen as being embedded in an entire culture and industry around dieting and called out as a scam that is harmful for people’s relationship with eating practices and movement: “Diet culture has ruined how we engage with nutrition and movement. The idea that we should get the fewest calories possible from our food and then burn the most calories possible through our exercise is a recipe for eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and self hatred” (I_htb_3, @hannahtalksbodies 2022). As Gloria Lucas therefore highlights in regards to the education around fatphobia: “it’s not always about learning but unlearning” (V_3, Gloria 2020: 13:50 min). At the same time it is acknowledged that unlearning cultural believes can be hard. Even though the application of fat hatred in personal interactions is in most cases rather obvious and direct, Marquisele Mercedes stresses that fatphobia can be expressed by people through coded language too:

You don’t have to say “I think all fat people have to lose weight” to hate fat people. People who hate fat people frequently say “this is really about health and we should focus on promoting healthy behaviors” (I_fm_2.1, @fatmarquisele 2022).

Just because the fatphobia is not super obviously in your face does not mean that there is no fatphobia (I_fm_2.6, @fatmarquisele 2022).

The supposed concern for people’s health here is understood as being insincere and as a way to mask an underlying ambition for aesthetic motives (see Tischner 2013: 21, after Murray 2005b). What complicates this situation even further is that the prejudice and inequity which fat people face is oftentimes not perceived as such by society even when it is obvious or presumed to be deserved: “Most people believe that discrimination against fat people isn’t discrimination at all” (V_1, Tovar 2017: 01:45 min).

Such sentiments are highly connected to and resulting from the pathologization of fatness: “The idea that there is something inherently wrong if you carry a larger body, we automatically attribute fatness to sickness” (I_fotc_4, @freshoutthecocoon 2022). Contrary to this assumption and the surrounding dominant discourse, educators within the body liberation movement like Robin Zabiegalski urge not only for the cultural destigmatisation but as well for the demedicalisation of fat people:

Fatness is not a disease and it’s certainly not a public health crisis. [...] Fatness hasn’t been *proven* to *cause* any diseases. Fatness is *correlated* with some diseases but correlation is not causation. [...] Ob*sity and ov*rweight are slurs. And you don’t get to say they aren’t if a fat person is telling you they are (I_blr_3, @Body.lib.robinhood 2022).

In line with this argument Hannah Fuhlendorf comes to the conclusion in her work as a counsellor and therapist that “[t]here is no medical benefit to pathologizing or stigmatizing body size. None” (I_htb_2, @hannahtalksbodies 2022). Instead, as Dolan points towards in her research: “Medicine, it seems, has a long history of using bodies and their supposed deficiencies (or culture has a long history of using medicine) as justification for dehumanizing groups of people” (2018: 5). Consequently, the critical knowledge production presented follows the logic of the social model of disability (instead of the medical one) where the problem is placed not within the fat body but rather within society and institutions such as medicine (see Cooper 2010: 1026). This gets even clearer through Monica Kriete commentary on the previous assertions: “Saying ‘obesity isn’t a disease’ doesn’t mean ‘all fat people are healthy.’ It means, ‘when fat people have medical issues, social factors and/or inadequate health care - often lifelong - are a better explanation for health inequities than ‘gross fatty can’t stop eating donuts’” (I_fmp_2, @fattymph 2022). In addition, the use of the Body Mass Index (BMI) in medicine is regularly criticised as a tool that lacks value in aiding treatment while being harmful in terms of stigmatising larger bodies and demanded to be abolished:

Get rid of it and replace it with nothing. If the fat patient has an illness, the doctor can treat that illness. If medications need to be dosed based on weight, there are formulas that already exist to calculate those. If a doctor wants to educate patients on the benefits of health promoting behaviors they can do that with all their patients. There is no medical scenario where the BMI is the most effective, specialized tool for the job (I_htb_2, @hannahtalksbodies 2022).

Furthermore, a big part of the education on antifatness within the body liberation movement is centred around experiences of medical fatphobia. Structural deficits such as doctors lacking training in e.g. operations on fat bodies or fat people being excluded from medical trials as well as extensive amounts of incidents where rigorous mistreatment and misdiagnoses happened are problematized. Similar cases to Abby’s, as mentioned in Virgie Tovar’s talk, are thereby reported by numerous people:

Abby started to have excruciating uterine cramps in her 20s and she tried to ignore it but ended up at the hospital and her doctor took one look at her saw fat person and rather than examine her told her that she simply needed to lose weight and the pain would go away. Even though Abby sensed there was something more serious happening inside, she didn't feel empowered to speak back to the doctor so she left and she didn't return to another doctor for three years and during those three years a tumour grew inside of her unmonitored and undetected (V_1, Tovar 2017: 11:38min).

The demand to first lose weight before having access to adequate health care and weight-loss as the only prescribed treatment plan for any health related problem that fat people experience is thereby not only incredibly discriminatory but a serious danger. Asking what superfat and infinifat people that follow Aubrey Gordon account on Instagram wish smaller fats and straight size people better understand about their experience, one person consequentially answered anonymously: “That my advocacy against fatphobia is about life and death, not just people’s feelings” (I_yff_s_2, @yrfatfriend 2019).

7.1.2. Sharing Intersectional Experiences

The previously presented knowledge on fatphobia which focuses on more general aspects that are regularly experienced by most fat people, is complemented additionally through the ones by multiple marginalized people within the movement that share the specificity of their lived experience in terms of power structures at the intersections of various discriminatory categories. In their accounts, the concept of intersectionality is often referred to for emphasising the importance of nuanced engagement: “All of our experiences are not the same and intersectionality is real! It's not divisive to tell someone that there are barriers you experience that they never will although you belong to the same group” (I_fotc_4, @freshoutthecocoon 2022). Within the data, the positioning on the fat spectrum and gender nonconformativity are regarded to be of especial impact.

Infinifat and superfat people for instance highlight how the fat hatred they are facing is not only heightened but at times quite different from mid and small fat individuals’. One respondent to Aubrey Gordons community question goes as far as to say: ”The difference between our experience is vast. As large as the difference between yours and a thin persons. We are both fat but it’s not at all the same” (I_yff_s_2, @yrfatfriend 2019). Examples that are named in terms of difference are among others obvious stares and display of disgust, lack of options regarding clothing, reduced accessibility of public spaces like toilets or seats and exclusion from romantic relationships. As another participant illuminates this: “Every situation is a potential nightmare. Dinner out, drinks at a bar, the movies. Everything” (ibid.). Moreover, the lack of acknowledgement of their situation and representation within the fat community itself is criticized: “Nobody wants to hear us” (ibid.). Self-advocacy and sharing

their daily life struggles on Instagram can therefore be read as counteracting this described hyperinvisibility.

Confirming the previous research on fat trans and non-binary people's lived experience (see Taylor 2021: 277; White 2020: 117), people share how the intersection of their body size and gender shape their discrimination in specific ways too. Coming back to the fatphobia experienced in medicine, trans people express being denied gender affirming health care because of their fatness, especially when it comes to surgery. As educator Monica Kriete makes sense of this: "'Lose weight before we treat you' is a pervasive problem in every medical (sub)specialty and trans healthcare is NOT exempt" (I_fmph_5, @fattymph 2021). Additionally, in Da'Shaun Harrison's conversations with fellow fat Black trans people another issue gets visible, when they do get the much needed care: "I don't know if you know, but top surgery for big folk is almost twice as much as it is for the thinner folk" (Bo_dslh_3, Harrison 2022, after Bearboi: 91). Moreover, others voiced experiences of fatphobic surgeons that altered the results to their own understanding of what a fat man looks like whereby still leaving visible fat around their chests instead of removing it completely as wanted by the patient or doctors that botched bodies because they were not used to working on fat people.

Non-binary people repeatedly reported the distribution of fat on their bodies to be an obstacle in being perceived as androgynous, since "[a]ndrogyny is always viewed as something white, skinny and flat chested" (ibid., after Jackson: 95). As Sam Finch elaborates on this:

This used to distress me. I used to feel less valid as a trans person because my body did not fit the ideal. It's funny how, even in genderqueer and non-binary communities, we're slowly but surely creating body norms and expectations that are just as constricting as the ones we left behind when we transitioned (Bo_jb_4, Finch 2015: 167).

In addition, fat trans people also problematize the aspiration to thin body norms within the queer community which is keeping people from passing as trans: "Thin trans folks usually don't see my transness because I'm fat and dark-skinned. They also don't see it because it doesn't necessarily look trans. What does looking trans mean? I'll never know, but I know it isn't what I look like according to some" (ibid., after Mars: 93). Harrison summarizes these experience by stating that many masc nonbinary folks and trans men feel that being thin/muscular is the only way they can affirm their gender (ibid.: 96). The criticism that these people are raising against the hyperinvisibility of fat embodiment in trans spaces can thereby be connected to Johanson's research insights on queering the body:

The irony these stories point out - that members of oppressed social groups are perfectly capable of being oppressive about body norms within their own communities - underscores the real value of queer

theory in the project of disabling body norms. Queering the body is not necessarily about altering one's appearance and behavior in defiance of dominant norms (although there's nothing wrong with that). It's about questioning our choices (or lack of choices) with respect to how our bodies look and move, regardless of our position(s) on the multiple spectrums of social identifications (2018: 107).

Nevertheless, by sharing these lived experiences, fat trans individuals not only contribute to the knowledge on power structures but help dismantle them.

7.2. Mental Health Is Health

In direct connection to the latter theme, the subsequent pattern within the data was identified to be bound together by the core idea that mental health is health. Unsurprisingly, people within the body liberation movement, like Hunter Shackelford, repeatedly address the hardships of being fat in an anti-fat world and the fatigue that is caused by both a constant pressure to perform and the need to deal with persistent discrimination: "I am exhausted. It's devastating how many wars we fight daily just to exist, just to be safe, just to live in our truth, just to be loved" (I_htl_3, @huntythelion 2021). Moreover, they elaborate in another post, how this living condition evokes strong feelings as well as emotional reactions and how it affects one's mental health: "I cry a lot about how the world hunts, mocks, terrorizes, and kills ugly/ undesirable/ nonhuman people. Niggas who embody any identity of being fat, dark skin, disabled, queer, and/ or trans understand this. I've normalized dying and forgot what it's like to feel it (I_htl_2, @huntythelion 2021). In regards to what it means to engage in fat activism on a daily basis, Stephanie Yeboah shares similar thoughts with her followers:

Guys, at times, I'm tired. I'm tired of advocating. I'm tired of calling people out and holding individuals and brands accountable. I'm tired of being blacklisted and blocked by corporations who refuse to listen to those who are most marginalised. I'm tired of fatphobic DMs sent in by trolls. I'm tired of having to deal with fatphobic abuse nearly every day (I_sy_1, @stephanieyeboah 2022).

While exhaustion clearly being an important aspect to understanding abject bodies' experiences, this is rarely acknowledged outside of the community and will therefore be analysed in more detail in the following section. As a direct reaction to the experiences of fatphobia outlined above, the subthemes are about reconstructing wellness and meeting the resulting needs of abject bodies within this oppressive environment.

7.2.1. Wellness: Reconstructing Health

Public health is finally, finally coming to understand that "race" isn't a risk factor; RACISM is what creates health inequities between Black people and white people (and between other marginalized "racial" groups and white people). I hope we can get to the point of understanding "size" isn't a risk factor, but SIZEISM (I_fmph_2, @fattymp 2022).

What Monica Kriete addresses in this quote is that the previously presented oppression of fat bodies in everyday life as well as in health care and medicine takes a significant toll on their

wellbeing and that a change of perspective on the reasons why many people with abject bodies are experiencing health problems is necessary: it is not their bodies being a risk for their health but rather how their bodies are treated by others. In line with this understanding, Robin Zabiegalski further points towards academic knowledge: "New research is showing that weight stigma and weight cycling (aka yo-yo dieting) are more likely to cause poor health outcomes than being and staying fat" (I_blr_3, @Body.lib.robinhood 2022). Additionally, when people do follow weightloss rules such as 'eat less food, burn more calories', it often leads into what Stephanie Yeboah names as "sacrificing your mental health for a smaller body" (I_sy_2, @stephanieyeboah 2022). Furthermore, Hannah Fuhlendorf illustrates how the prevailing neoliberal narrative of self-responsibility in terms of health is generally problematic and how commonly promoted behaviours are understood as guaranteeing wellness:

These biases have infiltrated our societal beliefs about health to the point where most people legitimately believe that if you eat enough kale, or run enough miles, or reach your dream weight that, apart from getting hit by a bus, you're basically immortal. This is not true. What we do know is that a person's health is composed of about a thousand different factors. And whatever your definition or your measurement of health is, you can lose it in an instant. Often due to reasons that are unforeseeable and out of your control. Health is not a thing you can guarantee or wrestle into submission. And pretending that health is solely a result of personal choices is not only untrue, but incredibly ableist (I_htb_1, @hannahtalksbodies 2022).

This personal choice framing is thereby often used as a legitimisation for shaming and discrimination and connects back to the point made about poor health resulting from these external factors. Another aspect that she comments on is about the relationship between physical and mental health: "If your pursuit of physical health is a detriment to your mental health, then it's not health at all. It's harm" (I_htb_3, @hannahtalksbodies 2022). What this statement highlights, is not only that health has a physical and a mental aspect but that both are equally important and harm should be avoided. When behaviours are promoted that are supposed to benefit the physical health while having a negative impact on the mental health, they cannot be called healthy since the two need to be thought of together and should not be looked at separately when evaluating practices. This way of conceptualising physical and mental health can be understood as a contestation of the Cartesian mind/body split, which has been frequently problematized by feminist scholars too. It is as well in line with theories within disability studies that recognize the way in which mind and body affect each other in a myriad ways that cannot be separated. Margaret Price's concept of the bodymind captures this apprehension (see Bê 2019: 1335). "Feminist materialist disability theory conceptualizes the bodymind as processual and relational - as fluid, integrated, inter-connected, and always

becoming through its continual interaction with the social, cultural, and material world” (Rice et al. 2021: 98). This shift away from the body/mind split and the uncovering of health myths is also accompanied by many people within the body liberation movement focusing on wellbeing rather than on health altogether, as to be seen in Ivy Felicia’s post on holistic wellness:

Wellness is NOT ABOUT your physical size, contrary to what society has led us to believe. Wellness is more than your physical well-being too. You are a being who LIVES IN a body, but you are STILL MORE than just a body. You have thoughts, emotions, energy, relationships, career, etc. Your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being are all interconnected. When you are stressed, it impacts your physical body. When you are tired it impacts your mental ability. When you are energetically depleted it will impact your emotional well-being. It ALL CONNECTS (I_iaid_3, @iamivyfelicia 2022).

Attending to all of these needs is therefore seen as crucial and consequentially takes up substantial space in conversations around the hyper(in)visibility of abject bodies in the collected data as well.

7.2.2. Meeting Needs

Since living in a state of hyper(in)visibility means that one’s desires and needs are rigorously overlooked and ignored, one approach to struggle against it is to not only make those needs visible and claim them as important but to attend to them as a community and by oneself. As Sonya Renee Taylor cites the queer Black poet and activist Audrey Lord at the beginning of her talk on bodies as resistance: ”Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare” (V_2, Taylor 2017: 00:17 min). Which kinds of self-care are needed may vary from person to person but patterns within the data could be identified too. Asher Larmie’s account is thereby representational for various people’s lived experiences and resulting desires:

My body is a protest. Existing in my fat body and making no effort to shrink it... in fact to be publicly against shrinking it.. is a protest. And I'm proud of that. But sometimes I just want to rest. Sometimes I just want to go out for a meal or walk down the street in peace. Sometimes I want to hang out with friends and coworkers without having to explain myself. When your body is the protest, you never get to do that. You never get to put the sign down at the end of the day and stop marching. You can't take a day or a week or a month off (I_tfdu_2, @thefatdocuk 2022).

The wish for existing in peace and the urgent need for rest are most prominently mentioned. While resting is necessary to recover from exhaustion, it is not only hard to be implemented because of the reasons Asher explains. What complicates the situation further is that we live in a society that values overworking oneself and regards taking time off as laziness: “It takes courage to say YES to REST and PLAY in a culture where EXHAUSTION is seen as a status symbol” (I_fwoc_1, @fatwomenofcolor 2021). As a result, reoccurring posts about the

importance of rest, especially for marginalized bodies, can be found from various people. Another concept that is connected to this is the one of body peace, which has especial importance in Ivy Felicia's work but is referred to by other fat Black women too. While it stands in relation to the more commonly used ideas of body love and body acceptance, it can be regarded as more radical since it acknowledges structural power imbalances and does not solely centre around demands of self-responsibility:

The ancestors taught me about the power of INTERNAL PEACE when my body is the subject of political war. The oppressor may direct violence against my body but I WILL NOT. The oppressor may direct shame against my body but I WILL NOT. As a fat, Black woman I am committed to peace, compassion, and patience with my body. I am committed to nourishing my mental, emotional, and spiritual well being as a way of honoring my OWN power and body sovereignty. This is INTERNAL power for me as the external war continues (I_iaif_4, @iamivyfelicia 2021).

Central to body peace is thereby the idea to create a safe space with oneself and it is regarded as a process rather than a fixed state. Besides the already named practices like letting go of shame, practicing patience and embracing compassion, she adds learning and unlearning as well as healing. Additionally, Sonya Renee Taylor underlines the power that this approach can hold, not only for peoples own wellness but for contributing to change:

As we learn to make peace with our bodies and make peace with other people's bodies we create an opening for creating a more just and equitable world. Every time you call truce with your body you interrupt a system of violence and power that profits off of yourself hate. Every time you interrogate the beliefs and biases that you have about other bodies you interrupt a system that profits off of the way that you feel about other bodies and the systems of comparison that we live in (V_2, Taylor 2017: 02:54 min).

Moreover, since a neoliberal perspective is oftentimes rejected within these discussions, the need of community support for doing this work as well as the possibility to get professional help are stressed.

Additionally, affirmations and positive reminders such as 'you are not a failure', 'you are amazing' or 'enjoy your food' are regularly shared with each other in the context of attending to emotional needs. Acknowledging and giving room to expressing and feeling emotions is furthermore of great importance. Hereby the sharing of advice in how to better handle negative perceived feelings such as shame, guilt, disgust and fear is central. To care about fat people's feelings and to make space both for sadness that comes through experiencing oppression and the anger that is a result of the mistreatment is thereby another strategy to fight against the hyperinvisibility. "In other words, thoughts and feelings matter because systems of domination certainly can influence how people feel about themselves; consequently, paying attention to them is in itself a political act" (Bê 2019: 1338).

7.3. Fat Resistance

While the earlier examples of self-care, rest and body peace are vital concepts for attending to mental health and holistic wellbeing, actively practicing them can very well be understood as a strategy of resistance too: “The powerful thing is that the benefits extend beyond us. When we rest, we redefine the narrative about who we are and what we DESERVE. Leisure can be simultaneously personal and political” (I_fwoc_4, @fatwomenofcolor 2021). As Sonya Renee Taylor further stresses this in her talk on bodies as everyday acts of resistance: “The truth is our bodies are political. The personal is political whether we want it to be or not. So the really only question to be pondered is whether or not we will use our bodies to uphold systems of oppression or to defy them” (V_2, Taylor 2017: 01:25 min). So while struggling against these systems is exhausting, many people within the body liberation movement still commit to this work, as Stephanie Yeboah reasons:

But then I continue. And I’ll continue to. Because change needs to happen somehow. If I don’t do it, who will? This isn’t me saying I’m amazing and can solve all the problems, but if we all stop making noise about the things that affect us, it gives permission for these behaviours to continue. I do it because I want to see women who look like me feel seen, and that one day if I ever have a daughter, I can look her in the eye and be proud that she can grow up in a world that is hopefully a little more tolerant, due to some of the work we’ve done now (I_sy_1, @stephanieyeboah 2021).

The concept of resistance is thereby one that is frequently referred to directly or an underling idea behind statements and claims made. Academically, resistance is often theorized in relation to power and oppression: “For Butler as for Foucault, where there is power there is resistance” (Threadcraft 2015: 13). Furthermore, “[r]esistance harnesses power and uses strategies” (Peters et al. 2009: 545). As Stewart and Breeden elaborate in their article on what can be regarded as resistance, they highlight like Taylor that it can be found in active confrontation as well as in everyday acts of eluding the consequences of subjugation:

Beyond public displays tied explicitly to large social movements, mobilizing, or organizing strategy, resistance can also manifest as everyday acts that work to undermine power or disrupt the pervasiveness of oppression (Butz and Ripmeester 1999; Collins 2000; Stewart 2019). Resistance can, in these terms, also include avoidance, survival, and coping (Johansson and Vinthagen 2016). Through these frameworks, everyday resistance is legitimate and allows more nuance that is necessary for examining relationships between aspects of dominance and subversion, resistance and power (Stewart/ Breeden 2021: 223f).

Additionally, while confrontation is not always ideal or even possible without posing a serious risk to the safety of the most marginalized bodies, engaging with small everyday acts – those which Cooper calls micro fat activism (see 2016: Micro FA, para. 1-3) - can be a more accessible form of resistance for all (see Stewart/ Breeden 2021: 224). In the following sections, such acts of fat resistance will be mainly analysed grouped around the subthemes 1) withstanding oppression and 2) celebration and joy. What should be kept in mind throughout

the next sections is the reminder from Hunter Shackelford about ambivalence within these practices: “Everyone fighting for freedom is living in contradiction. And everyone fighting for freedom is chasing a politic we have yet to fully embody, and a world we have yet to see” (I_hl_2, @huntythelion 2021).

7.3.1. Withstanding Oppression

Following the understanding of the concept as previously outlined, existing and showing up in the world in line with one’s authentic self and surviving the oppression resulting from being visibly non-normative can be regarded as resistance in itself:

What if I told you that political activism is this: [picture of a female presenting person with a hijab and beard]? Seek model Harnaam Kaur unapologetically rocking a beard. What if I told you it's Stella Young doing a TED talk on how she is not your inspiration porn. What if I told you that it was fifty, a hundred Black men graduating from college? [...] Some days the invocation of simply being seen in the body we have today is the chant, is the march, is the picket sign. (V_2, Taylor 2017: 00:50 min).

These aspects of resistance have been discussed within previous research on online fat activism, mostly with a focus on Instagram pictures that show fat bodies living their lives unapologetically: “To be unapologetic can, in this context, first and foremost be understood as a stance or approach in relation to body norms or expectations, a refusal to put up with being body shamed and to be ashamed of your body” (Johansson 2021: 136). While an analysis of posted pictures is not part of this thesis project, similar insights into strategies of resistance can be found in textual form within the caption of posts, book chapters and speeches in the collected data.

Closely connected to the strategy of being unapologetic is the resistance against judging the appearance of bodies. As Virgie Tovar suggests in the end of her TEDtalk: “The next time that you look in the mirror and you have the impulse to judge the body you see or you look at another person and have the impulse to judge their body, remember that childlike sense of wonder. After all you have nothing to lose but your shame” (V_1, Tovar 2017: 14:08 min). Instead of following the dominant first reaction of body shaming and policing, curiosity is suggested as a counter discursive alternative. Spade and Willse’s article thereby helps to read such approaches in terms of power: “When activists form consciousness-raising groups that encourage people to question standards about how they perceive their own bodies and identities and replace those norms with other ideas that they consider better, they are engaging with disciplinary power” (Spade/ Willse 2015: 4). Similarly, refusing to change one’s body and actively standing against weight loss regimes, is another common way of resisting in the body liberation movement, as the quote from Robin Zabiegalski illustrates:

So I won't pursue weight loss or dieting. I will continue to move the way I want, in ways that make my body feel good. I will continue to eat in a way that works for my body without caring about calories or macros or "good" and "bad" foods. I will continue to let my body regulate itself (I_blr_4, @Body.lib.robinhood 2022).

This form of resistance has been framed as particularly subversive within previous research on the topic since through it, cultural demands to achieve the normative body by the means of dieting are rejected and discipline as well as social control is withstood (see Gailey 2014: 79). Instead strategies like 'coming out as fat' (see Afful and Ricciardelli 2015: 462) and purposefully 'doing fat' (see Gailey 2014: 150) are commonly employed. Coming out as fat is thereby understood as a way to positively identify as a fat person and accepting one's embodiment: "As Charlotte Cooper (1998, 47) has said, 'Coming out makes us visible, it shows that we are fine as we are. It is a personal step which has wider social and political consequences, such as the promotion of diversity'" (ibid.: 142f). Moreover, doing fat refers to embracing fat stereotypes with the aim of subversion: "Through art, performance, comedy, and protest, some fat activists attempt to shift the collective view of fat as deviant or abhorrent. They seek to normalize the fat body by engaging in behaviors that many fat persons avoid publicly, like eating, exercising, or going swimming" (ibid.: 150). Another example is Asher Larmie declaring their fatness as part of who they are within one of their Instagram posts: "This is me, take it or leave it. But don't you dare tell me to change it" (I_tfdu_1, @thefatdocuk 2022).

Caleb Luna expands on this stance to accept fatness by rejecting any search for explanations why fat bodies exist: "We simply do because we do and we don't owe justification to anyone [...]. I choose queerness every day. I choose fatness every day. And those are both legitimate and desirable choices that improve my life" (I_dcb_3, @dr_chairbreaker 2022). Not only refusing to change one's natural body but to actively and publicly choosing an identity that is regarded as abject and claiming it as good instead, is a radical act of resistance. This goes hand in hand with resisting to take part in discussions about the worth of fat bodies, as Marquisele Mercedes explains:

You know what we're not doing in 2022? We're not allowing people to hide behind coded language while expressing their belief that fat people deserve to suffer because of their fatness. We're not allowing people to be ambiguous about whether or not they value fat lives. We're not debating the value of our own lives (I_fm_2, @fatmarquisele 2022).

It is this 'not doing', that characterises various forms of resistance to what is expected within dominant discourse. In summary, unapologetic self-expression, refusing to judge or change the body and claiming a positive fat identity that needs no explanation and stands for the equal value and worth of fat bodies are all ways to withstand oppression in everyday life.

7.3.2. Celebration and Joy

We only have one life, and we cannot waste it with thoughts of being smaller because there is no one way to be beautiful. There is no one way to be normal. So wear shorts in the summer. Your thighs deserve to be touched by the sun too. Eat an ice cream in public; did you not buy it with your own money? Wear a bikini or swimsuit on holiday. [...] Do not wait until you are thin enough to live your best life. You are literally worthy of it right now, in the body you are in now (I_sy_2, @stephanieyeboah 2021).

This statement of Stephanie Yeboah combines several reoccurring ideas around resistance that can be understood in relation to celebrating fat bodies and embracing fat joy: stopping to put one's life on hold, wearing clothes that are perceived as scary because of body shaming practices and changing the perspective on what beautiful can encompass. As Lauren Crow proclaims: "I am beautiful from every angle, but I do not need to be beautiful to be of value" (I_fwoc_3, @fatwomenofcolor 2021, after @4locrow). By claiming that fat bodies are beautiful while simultaneously untangling the beauty and value of bodies, dominant understanding of beauty are disturbed. Moreover, similarly to the strategy of living one's life unapologetically, various fat people utilize pictures to show how their bodies are beautiful by presenting themselves in currently fashionable outfits or underwear which are normally deemed to be reserved only for thin folks like for example crop tops, bodycon dresses or sexy lingerie. Instead of remaining invisible, exposure is used to struggle for positive visibility (see Johansson 2021: 117f; Morris 2019: 157). While this would be considered ordinary for many normative bodies, it is a form of resistance for fat people since the cultural expectation is to hide their bodies. In a post where Leah Vernon presents herself in a bodycon dress that shows off all the features and shape of the body, she shares her thoughts on wearing this type of clothing as a fat person:

Ew, cellulite. Baby me would say. When I was younger there was no way in hell I would be caught in anything that showcased the lumps in my thighs, butt, and tummy area. Like I wouldn't have believed you, if you said fast forward, you would outwardly wear a garment without smoothing the surface with an undergarment first. Impossible. Yet, here I am. Doing the impossible (I_i2_1, @ivernon2000 2022).

This quote highlights how her perspective has changed as she got older. The judgmental reaction of her younger self can be read as presenting the dominant cultural beliefs on acceptable clothing choices for her body, which she actively resists. As Craig's research on activism around beauty helps to further explain these practices: "Beauty politics are not just about freeing women from beauty standards, or making beauty ideals more inclusive. The politics are also about how women have used beauty, and claimed beauty, to control how they were perceived" (2021: 4). The online sphere of fatshion is thereby a community of belonging around fashionable clothing for fat people (see Johansson 2021: 133; Snider 2018: 341), that calls "for a more inclusive understanding of beauty and celebrates the fat body" (Afful/

Ricciardelli 2015: 463). However, within the community fat bodies are not only celebrated in their beauty but also for their achievements and their incredible resilience:

Fat folks, no matter where you are right now and what you're going through, take a moment to reflect upon how far you've come in spite of all those people who were cheering for you to fail. YOU. ARE. AMAZING. Fat folks and non fat folks who support us... let's all take a collective minute to celebrate how incredible we are (I_tfd_u_3, @thefatdocuk 2022).

As Asher Larmie continues to reflect on this in another post: “Oftentimes it feels like we spend our lives either defending ourselves or fighting for a better future. Which is why its good to take a moment to sit back and celebrate. We've earned it” (I_tfd_u_1, @thefatdocuk 2022). The celebration of fat bodies and their resistance is thereby often connected to fat joy. Since eating and sports are oftentimes used against fat people punitively, one aspect of joy as resistance is to reclaim the relationship with both of them by enjoying to eat delicious food and by moving the body only in way that feels good. As Marquisele Mercedes stresses: ”I deserve to be able to enjoy food without shame or discomfort. So do all of you” (I_fm_2, @fatmarquisele 2022). In her analysis of contemporary diet culture, Atherton concludes that “[t]his can be considered a form of pleasure activism understood as ‘work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy’” (2021: 32f, after Brown 2019: 13). Moreover, J Aprileo elaborates in his Instagram post on what it means to engage in joyful movement:

Joyful movement basically means JUST HAVE FUN WITH IT. Sometimes I lift weights, stretch, and/or dance. You don't have to have a routine or a plan - it all “counts” if it FEELS GOOD. I'm done thinking movement has to involve suffering. Emotional and physical. It doesn't feel fun or encouraging when it causes pain to my body. My inner child has had enough with exercise regimens forced upon them from adults promising results that I didn't even want!! I choose to nourish my relationship with movement. I choose to feel good in this body in motion right the heck now (I_cft_1, @comfyfattravels 2022).

Embracing joy and having fun is thereby a central concept within the body liberation movement that regularly comes up around various topics. In her piece on the importance of talking and posting selfies as a way to control the gaze and to counterbalance the overwhelming amount of normative bodies that have been even further photoshopped towards beauty ideals, Jes Baker too underlines that approaching new ways for engaging with one's body, such as taking pictures of it, needs to centre around joy:

HAVE FUN! Have so much fun. This is about you, and celebrating you. Despite what you've been told, selfies are not dangerous, vainglorious, or conceited. They are a tool for reclamation. For seeing yourself through your own eyes. For defining what you believe is worthy. So call all the shots, be the boss, do you, and celebrate! (Bo_jb_2, Baker 2015: 104).

Publicly and visibly advocating and representing fat celebration and joy functions as a way to interrupt processes of dehumanisation of fat bodies and is a resistance strategy against

oppression: “A fat person who loves themselves or who is even just okay with themselves, who insists that they experience happiness, is effectively contesting their abjection, insisting that they exist in a social space where subjectivity, positive experiences, and meaningfulness can occur” (Atherton 2021: 21). Furthermore, it can lead to empowerment of other fat people seeing that it is possible to claim an identity in joy and that there is a good life to be envisioned besides all the discrimination: ”Our bodies are worthy of enjoyment, and in the near future I hope that we as a society can stop allowing our bodies to hold us back from enjoying life and pursuing opportunities” (I_sy_2, @stephanieyeboah 2022).

7.4. Solidarity and Allyship

Finding the disability community was an amazing experience for me; it was similar to my experience discovering the body love community. Finally, people celebrated me for all of me - including my size and disabilities, instead of in spite of them. More importantly, these communities supported ME in loving ME for who I am, period (Bo_jb_3, Katzkattari 2015: 117).

As this quote from Shanna Katz Kattari’s essay on the intersections of their identity and the statements within prior themes show, community and support are important parts of the body liberation movement and are consequently regularly referred to within the data as well. Similarly to Katz Kattari, Joy Cox’s stresses the need for support in her post too: ”It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other” (I_fotc_5, @freshoutthecocoon 2021). Thus, this readiness for mutual support, is thereby theorized to be at the core of solidarity in research on the topic (see Stewart/ Schultze 2019: 1). Since changing systems takes work, community effort is regarded as necessary for its success and the importance of solidarity within and outside of the movement is oftentimes emphasised within the data. The focus is repeatedly on the need of taking concrete actions and getting active is consequentially most often called for. This is especially characteristic for processes of coalition building (see Gawerc 2021: 8). Through Anna Nicole Smith’s explanation, the demand for action gets clearer: “Discourse will only ever be that: a course of discussion. It’s something you talk about, not something on which you take action. Anybody can say shit” (I_itf_2, @itstransfat 2022). In line with this view, Aubrey Gordon asks allies the following crucial questions:

If safety, dignity, respect and even celebration of fat people are goals, what can you do to reach those goals? [...] [H]ow are you showing up for fat people? How are you creating material change for fat people, in health care and beyond? The role of allies isn't just to *feel the right way,* it's to 'do the right thing' (I_yff_2, @yrfatfriend 2022).

While these accounts attempt to weave back action into the understanding of what is at the core of being an ally, others within anti-colonial activism and research have argued for

changing the terminology completely to the one of an accomplice (see Przybylo/ Fahs 2021: 300). The former will nevertheless be used in the following because it is the chosen wording in the data. The last theme of this analysis is therefore going to be about the requested solidarity and allyship from people within the movement, whereby suggested actions by fat people will primarily be focused on around the subthemes of 1) listening and self-reflection, 2) safety and protection as well as 3) access and inclusion.

7.4.1. Listening and Self-Reflection

I've been sitting with what I need to do to align my work with the collective liberation envisioned by the most marginalized among us. Because our work needs to be guided by the most marginalized among us. Body liberation is only superficial unless it's for *all* bodies. Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian, superfat, infat, queer, trans bodies, and disabled bodies. [...] One of the very concrete things that marginalized folks have asked more privileged folks to do is take up less space in the community. I encourage everyone else with privilege in these communities to think about the actions they're going to take as well (I_blr_2, @Body.lib.robinhood 2022).

What Robin Zabiegalski addresses here, is one of the most reoccurring demands when it comes to solidarity within the body liberation community itself: to centre the voices of the most marginalized people and to stand back if you are more privileged. The organisation Nolose underlines this further in one of their posts on the topic: "Everyone in our community is valuable. No one should have to wait their turn. The work of fat liberation is on all of us to do. And we will all be better for it" (I_nf_1, @nolosefats 2021). A similar discussion is brought up by fat trans and non-binary people in the movement, like Anna Nicole Smith, addressing the problems that arise from not prioritizing the most marginalized in the context of queer communities and trans spaces:

It's trans day of visibility and I'm tired of seeing privileged trans peoples faces taking up so much space on my feed. I'm ready for this black mirror episode of a holiday to shrivel up and die tbh. The trans ppl who will undoubtedly get the most attention today are the same trans people sucking up all the attention every other day of the year. Popular folks in conventionally attractive bodies posting their overly filtered selfies today should be taxed for it (I_itf_1, @itstransfat 2021).

The hyperinvisibility and representation of fat bodies within their own communities that should instead be a place for uplifting them is described as being unbearable to the point that they mention feeling like dying. They call this injustice out with the intention to make thin trans people reflect on their privilege and not draw all attention to themselves.

Coming back to the broader movement and its connected allies, this sentiment is reflected within the following answers from the community to Aubrey Gordon asking them to complete the sentence 'As a fat person, I want more people to show up for me...':

- By simply listening. Trusting and believing my experiences. Show sympathy and solidarity.
- Listening to and hearing my experiences as un-relatable as they seem to you.
- Thin people not telling me what it's like to be fat. Just listen thin people. Learn.

- Believe me when I tell you about my experience as a fat person (I_yff_s_1, @yrfatfriend 2019).

The wish that thin people listen to and believe the experiences of fat people is stated repeatedly, with these especially expressive quotes being just four out of many more addressing the same aspect. Engaging in self-reflection and interrogating one's thin privilege is seen as an important action to be taken: "I think it's incredibly important for privileged people to call attention to the areas they are privileged and its illegitimacy" (I_dcb_3, @dr_chairbreaker 2022). One example of thin privilege is outlined by Robin Zabiegalski:

We're all expected to perform to conform. But the consequences are far different when fat people don't perform the way they're expected to. When thin people don't perform health, gender, beauty, or fashion it's "edgy" and "nonconformist" and "cool." When fat people don't perform, they're harassed and assaulted and ostracized and denied care (I_blr_1, @Body.lib.robinhood 2022).

Furthermore, Hannah Fuhlendorf explains in her talk on how helping clients with experiences of fatphobia is different depending on their size, which displays another area of where thin privilege is making a difference. While for thin folks the work centres around addressing internalized fatphobia, fat people are in need for tools that aid them in dealing with interpersonal and systematic fatphobia too: "So for fat folks, I am not just teaching clients how to self-soothe and remain focused when they feel stressed. I am also teaching them how to advocate for themselves in these various situations so that they can access the same resources thin folks get without question" (I_htb_4, @hannahtalksbodies 2022). As Przybylo and Fahs highlight: "Thin privilege succeeds in its fraudulent commitments to forgetting the thin body as a socio-culturally constructed site of value" (2021: 304). Thus, Asher Larmie reminds their followers about this reality in one of their posts: "If you're a thin person in this tiny corner of the twitterverse, please remember that. Yes, we're all fighting for the same thing, but the difference is that you get to pick and choose when to do it. Fat people are not afforded that luxury" (I_tfdu_2, @thefatdocuk 2022).

7.4.2. Safety and Protection

While centring the most marginalized within the community and self-reflection are seen as important first steps to be taken by allies, Jordan Underwood highlights the problem of just engaging with visibility politics without doing anything beyond in their post:

Cis people need to do more always. Yall continually fail trans people. The bar is on the ground. Send some \$\$\$ to the trans folks in my mutual aid highlight, take action, confront transphobia within your families and in your workplace. Actually do the work to protect us. Other than that, I'm wholly disinterested in your self proclaimed allyship. [...] I want immediate protection and harm reduction so that we can use our energy to fight for collective liberation (I_jh_1, @jordallenhall 2021).

He further explains that “[t]o be visible, or ‘represented’ doesn't mean that you are protected. In fact, visibility will always beget violence. Without intentional protection for both the individual and community being represented, it only serves to re-traumatize all parties involved” (ibid.). Jervae thereby underlines that the same is true when it comes to racism: ”Stop gaslighting us and acknowledge that fat black women and femmes are hated, over policed and under protected. As a result of fatphobia and misogynoir. And commit to treating us better” (I_j_2, @jervae 2020). Consequentially, solidarity and allyship needs to be about safety and protection too. These issues are voiced by various fat people but are especially stressed by the most marginalized. The request is to work towards safer environments and spaces without violence not only with the sole interest of comfort for oneself but so that everyone within the community can be. Another aspect that goes hand in hand with it is the demand to change the material conditions of multiple marginalized fat people. The most frequently suggested action in this context is to financially support individuals in need and to pay them for their labour that is - like the educational content on Instagram - often provided for free. On top of that, other concrete actions that are highlighted in the community responses to Aubrey Gordon earlier mentioned questions, centre around defending and actively standing up for fat people in everyday interactions. The following quotes provide some of the many examples:

- Defending fat people – speaking up for fat people – use that thin privilege.
- Standing up for me when people make comments about my body/food.
- Respect me when I’m saying that I don’t want to hear diet talk.
- Challenging fatphobia both when I am and when I’m not around.
- Noticing and *saying* when something is harmful for or ignorant of fat folk.
Don’t make us always have to point it out.
- Talking about fats positively when we’re not around (I_yff_s_1, @yrfatfriend 2019).

And as Gloria Lucas explains in her conversation with Tessa Hersh: ”Also starting these conversations in our homes, with our friends and serving as disrupters when people are being hurt by suggestions of how they need to change their bodies” (V_3, Lucas 2020: 03:33 min). All these former suggestions for taking action as an ally can thereby be understood as aiding in the struggle against the hyper(in)visibility of abject bodies.

7.4.3. Inclusion and Accessibility

The last two concepts that are crucial in terms of solidarity within the movement have been identified to be inclusion and accessibility. The following quote from Jervae illuminates how access in terms of clothing is a crucial issue for superfat and infinifat people and how the posed questions can function as further inspiration for supporting fat people in their struggle:

Can you imagine a world where thin white women refuse to shop at store that don't carry plus sizes? Can you imagine thin white women being absolutely outraged when they walk into stores and they can't find a six X for women? Can you imagine thin white women waking up to the reality that their fear of getting fat is directly connected to the lack of clothing options in size 6 X? Can you imagine thin white wealthy women putting their money towards access for clothing to all? Can you imagine thin white famous women refusing to be seen in brands that don't go up to a size 6 X? I can (I_j_1, @jervae 2022).

The lack of access is thereby not limited to clothing but expands to areas of health, sports and public spaces; moreover community and special events, such as pride or conferences, are highlighted to often be inaccessible too. As Robin Zabiegalski shares their experience with unintentionally losing weight: "I've been reminded why weight loss is so seductive - because life is actually easier and more accessible when you're thinner" (I_blr_4, @Body.lib.robinhood 2021). Moreover, Virgie Tovar reminds her listeners of this reality too by acknowledging that "fat people actually have less access to meaningful participation in society" (V_1, Tovar 2017: 01:43 min). Addressing the exclusion of fat people with disabilities in the queer community, Anna Nicole Smith states further issues of inclusion and access as follows:

Well, let's also not forget that pride is a wholly inaccessible celebration of queerness. [...] Entire communities of queer people face physical barriers that completely exclude us from participating, but that's never stopped the millions of abled attendees from showing up to corporate pride enmasse each year. I wonder, how many folks, when entering the festival, stop to think about all of their community members and friends who aren't there bc our inclusion was of such a low priority to y'all? (I_itf_2, @itstransfat 2021).

Their underlying demand in terms of solidarity is thereby clearly for allies to prioritize inclusion and accommodation of every body no matter the range of their mobility or ability: "I'm ready for the queer community as a whole to step up and take action in making our community a better, more inclusive place for all" (ibid.). A common wording in other peoples shared experiences of lacking access is oftentimes the one of 'not fitting'. An insightful way to understand these encounters from a feminist disability approach provides Garland-Thomson's concept of misfits. Here the image is employed of two things misfitting in their juxtaposition, not as something inherent to someone or something (see 2011: 593). "The dynamism between body and world that produces fits or misfits comes at the spatial and temporal points of encounter between dynamic but relatively stable bodies and environments" (ibid.: 594). Looking at fitting or misfitting as a spectrum and performance which is dependent on the specific moment and place can be empowering and takes the blame away from the individual experiencing a misfit, since "the performing agent in a misfit materializes not in herself but rather literally up against the thingness of the world" (ibid.). Moreover, "[t]he utility of the concept of misfit is that it definitively lodges injustice and discrimination

in the materiality of the world more than in social attitudes or representational practices, even while it recognizes their mutually constituting entanglement” (ibid.: 593).

In terms of how inclusion and accessibility can succeed and which steps to take, there is a vast knowledge of measures circulating within the body liberation movement, which is shared by people inhabiting various intersections. Regarding community events, demands from people with disabilities and infat/superfat people often overlap. The planning of events with accessibility in mind and publicly stating information about the accessibility of places as well as to officially name people with more accessibility needs as invited are the three most commonly mentioned. In addition, for people on the higher end of the fat spectrum seating options play a significant role. Consequentially, chairs are oftentimes suggested to have a weight limit of 500lb+ and no armrests (see I_yff_s_2, @yrfatfriend 2019). To accommodate people with various disabilities, Shanna Katz Kattari additionally stresses that sign language interpreters should be present, transcriptions and subtitles be available and quiet and scent-free zones be offered (see Bo_jb_3, Katz Kattari 2015: 118). Lastly, when organizers are still in doubt of how to proceed best, she further advises: “Just ask. Google is a wonderful thing for finding information online, and when you put out a call online asking for help making something more accessible and inclusive, people will usually recognize that support is needed and give you some ideas to help propel you forward!” (ibid.: 119). As another anonymous community member reminds us: “It’s exhausting living in a world that doesn’t value you. At all. And I just want a break. So maybe help out. Keep accessibility in mind. It will mean the world to me” (I_yff_s_2, @yrfatfriend 2019).

In summary, these previously stated demands for solidarity and allyship are in line with prior research that identified the following characteristics of necessity to be a good ally: “self-reflection, a willingness to be accountable, the drive to amplify voices on the margins, and a willingness to shut up and listen” (Manokaran et al. 2021: 544, after Carlson et al. 2019). Such requests are thereby made towards more privileged people both within and outside of the body liberation community.

8. Embracing Ambivalence, Ordinariness and Ugliness: Strengthening Alliances

“I believe that this is the only nobility to which we should aspire - that is, to be the best fighters against each other’s oppression, and in doing so, build links of solidarity and trust that will forge an invincible movement against all forms of injustice and inequality” (Przybylo/ Fahs 2021: 297, after Feinberg 1997, 92). Agreeing with Feinberg, this last chapter

will therefore return to theoretical concepts which have the potential of aiding the alliance building between transgender, disability and fat activism: ambivalence, ordinariness and ugliness. In the opinion of this thesis, embracing them can help in building a more solid ground for collective actions and in thinking through possible joint future directions.

While embracing fat pride, normalising fat people, depathologizing fat embodiment and expanding the politics of beauty are all valuable strategies to struggle against the hyper(in)visibility of fat bodies, they have also been problematized by people inhabiting various marginalized intersections to be hindering when it comes to voicing the complexity of their lived experience and in terms of alliance building.

The first aspect that shall be addressed is about feelings of ambivalence which put fat bodies engaging with fat politics into a conflicting situation: "Ambivalence about fat pride is not encouraged or accepted in fat activist discourse, for it is seen as giving in to the prevailing negative discourses around fat embodiment" (Lupton 2013: 92). While it is a logical step that fatphobia is aimed to be banned from fat communities' safe spaces, it results in both people having to be already liberated to access community support and the exclusion of bodies that are still struggling (see Dolan 2018: 11). "In contrast, Murray wants to emphasize the potential for ambiguity and ambivalence in fat politics: to acknowledge that fat people, however hard they try, may not quite manage to 'think themselves' positive about their fat embodiment and may have to struggle with feelings of ambivalence about their fatness" (Lupton 2013: 92, after Murray 2008: 90). "After all, 'how,' she asks, 'can you completely remove yourself from the discourses that constitute us as subjects?'" (Dolan 2018: 11, after Murray 2008: 159). I therefore too want to argue for embracing compassion with fat people's feelings of ambivalence and allowing them to express their full experience, since learning and unlearning is an ongoing process and hiding troubling thoughts just creates more shame.

Allowing ambivalence in fat politics can also create bridges and a space for fat trans people, when they are for example forced through their healthcare providers or doctors to pursuit weight-loss before they can access gender affirming surgery. As highlighted through their accounts before, in such a situation fat trans people often feel like they have to choose between their fat identity and their trans identity which results in feelings of being a traitor. These emotions can be regarded as a reasonable reaction when looking at the current general backlash within the movement towards people that seek out weight-loss for whatever reason, prominent examples being Adele or Rebel Wilson. In this regard, I want to highlight the importance of compassion towards ambivalence and that losing weight cannot be equated with being against fat politics. "As Cooper (2016b) notes, fat women can support fat activism

but still seek weight-loss as a way of putting ‘an end to their suffering as fat women’” (Morris 2019: 164). Embracing ambivalence can therefore be both a way towards more inclusive politics and an entry point for alliance building with transgender activism. An example of how this can be done is named by Meleo-Erwin: “The Queer Commons organizers invited attendees to tell their stories of embodiment, welcoming in contradiction, shame, celebration, reclamation and ambivalence” (2012: 398).

“Further, it is understandable that some strands of fat activism should want to pursue what can be seen as an assimilationist strategy of bringing fat bodies under the banner of normal. For ‘normal’ is a seductive, if not compulsory, category, particularly for those of us who find ourselves relegated to the repulsed and detestable state of pathology” (Meleo-Erwin 2012: 394). Nonetheless, as Meleo-Erwin elaborates on the downsides of this approach, normality requests the hiding of our differences and encourages the denying of our complex lived experience, resulting in people which are furthest away from normative embodiment being left behind (ibid.: 395, after Kelly 2002). “Further, because the social meanings attached to fatness are necessarily entwined with systems of gender, race, class and disability (Garland-Thomson 2006; Herndon 2005), by distancing ourselves from those who least approximate normalcy we may reinscribe existing hierarchical relations of power” (ibid.). Similar criticism has been raised about the depathologization strategy of disconnecting fatness from ill health. “Amongst many fat activists there is a tendency to challenge fatphobia by asserting that one’s own fatness is neither due to poor eating habits nor a lack of exercise and to then highlight the ways in which one engages in a ‘proper’ diet and physical activity” (ibid.: 392). This has resulted in differentiating fat people into ‘good fatties’ vs. ‘bad fatties’ and is therefore problematized for its harmful consequences as well as entanglement with morality and healthism. In terms of alliance building with disability activism, such healthism and striving for normalcy is regarded as a barrier. An approach that can be utilized instead of these strategies and connects to the concept of ambivalence is Eli Clare’s understanding of the ‘ordinary and familiar’. As Meleo-Erwin further elaborates:

Following Clare, a politics of the ordinary and familiar not only opens up space for celebration and pleasure, but it makes room for pain, struggle and even shame. Making room for that which can be challenging to admit to fellow activists, let alone to outsiders, disrupts the silence and shame that undergird a politics based on normative assimilation. As well, a politics of the ordinary and familiar moves us outside of false, binary choices of reclamation and celebration or shame and normalization. And by doing so, room is made for contradictory and multiple stories which, in turn, allows for both (ibid. 397).

Thus, embracing the ordinary and familiar and thereby making space for the complexity of our lived experiences is relieving and can be pleasurable (see ibid.). Moreover, it maps onto

the themes brought up in the analysis, in terms of allowing all feelings while simultaneously engaging with fat joy.

The last concept that shall be introduced is a direct response to problems arising from the strategy of expanding beauty politics and will be argued for as both a promising alternative and a ground on which transgender, disability and fat activism can build on collectively: ugliness. While personally claiming to be beautiful against the societal views on one's body that deem it not to be, is a way of resisting the dominant discourse and can feel empowering to the individual, as a community strategy it remains a limited mode of action. This is because beauty as a concept is highly exclusionary: "By its very nature as a categorizing system, beauty is classified not only via a checklist of what one 'has' (again, usually whiteness, thinness, youth, and physical, intellectual, and mental ability), but is constructed against what one is not" (Snider 2018: 345). Much of current fat politics nevertheless "privileges what Murray terms 'heteronormative aesthetic ideals'" (Dolan 2018: 12f, after Murray 2008: 161). Snider therefore concludes in her analysis on fat beauty politics that having the expansion of beauty as a main goal in the fight of fat oppression is short-sighted because it reifies power imbalances against the most marginalised people. Instead ugliness should be used as a tool for queering mainstream societal norms. (see *ibid.*: 338) In line with these insights, I argue that a politics of ugliness holds great potential of overarching inclusion. Mingue's questions are thereby especially thought provoking of how this could be undertaken:

We all run from the ugly. And the farther we run from it, the more we stigmatize it and the more power we give beauty. Our communities are obsessed with being beautiful and gorgeous and hot. What would it mean if we were ugly? What would it mean if we didn't run from our own ugliness or each other's? How do we take the sting out of "ugly?" What would it mean to acknowledge our ugliness for all it has given us, how it has shaped our brilliance and taught us about how we never want to make anyone else feel? What would it take for us to be able to risk being ugly, in whatever that means for us? What would happen if we stopped apologizing for our ugly, stopped being ashamed of it? (Mingus 2011, after Pfeffer 2021: 167).

By acknowledging the ugly in all of us and by embracing ugliness rather than running away from it, the possibility opens up to fully and without shame step into our shared humanity. While beauty confines us in singular and uniform aesthetics, there are prolific and multiple ways one can be ugly (see Snider 2018: 345). Embracing ugliness means embracing all of us in the way we are in this current moment of time and through that the visual landscape enlarges. The conscious choice of collectively making ugliness visible "can expand the range of bodies we expect to see and broaden the terrain where we expect to see such bodies" (*ibid.*: 347, after Garland-Thomson 2009). It provides a non-pathologizing way of discussing the strange, awkward and the grotesque aspects of our embodiment (see *ibid.*: 338) and fosters a

basis where all abject bodies can meet and depart from. “Similarly, Pitts (1998), drawing upon Bakhtin, suggests that the ‘grotesque’ body, the body that is not free of messiness or ambiguity, invites a space of liminality. This liminality, she argues, can act in the service of transgression and subversion for those who engage in norm-transgressing bodily practices” (Meleo-Erwin 2012: 395f). The politics of ugliness therefore provide a valuable addition to existing strategies within transgender, disability and fat activism to struggle against the pathologization of bodies together.

9. Conclusion

The concluding chapter will provide a summary of the findings, address the aims of the thesis and give an outlook. For this, each research question will be given a respective section.

Looking at the existing theory on normative embodiment in the West, I have presented the theorization of body norms through an intersectional lens and for them to be intertwined with a variety of cultural meanings, social hierarchies as well as the following oppressive systems (see Johnson 2018: 109): racism, fatphobia, sexism, ableism and classism. Thus, body norms are explained to be culturally dependent, historically subjected to change and as neither value-free nor natural (see Johnson 2018: 104; Ioannoni 2020: 126f). In the West the normative body is moreover stated to be currently white, nondisabled, cisgender, marked as heterosexual, wealthy, middle-aged and slim (see Atherton 2021: 15).

Following (fat) feminist theory, I have elucidated how beauty ideals have been closely connected to body normativity and how they centre on body size and shape as well as skin tone and hair. Similarly they are highlighted to measure along Eurocentric, white standards (see Johansson 2021: 120). Besides being fatphobic, sexist, ableist, classist and racist, beauty standards are acknowledged to be ageist (see Craig 2021: 6) and conflated with healthism (see Chrisler 2012: 611). Being perceived as attractive and beautiful is stressed to carry immense privilege (see Gailey 2014: 137) and to be highly political (see Craig 2021: 3). The achievement of beauty ideals is further connected to an underlying neoliberal rational in which personal responsibility and individualism are central aspects (see Gill 2021: 11).

In addition, I have presented how the setting of body norms is considered to create embodiment regarded as deviant and that deviance is marked by abjection, ugliness and negative emotions. Non-normative bodies are explained to be rendered abject when they are perceived as posing a threat to the dominant order (see Atherton 2021: 18, after Kristeva 1982: 4), whereby the abject indicates for others “the realm of ‘I don’t want to be that!’”

(Gailey 2014: 57, after Butler 1993: 3). Bodies frequently framed as abject are identified amongst others to be the ones of fat, disabled and trans people and that they often carry the stigma of being ugly. However, ugliness is not understood to be an attribute of bodies but a disciplinary practice around embodiment and it is stressed that there is no inherently 'ugly body' existing, since this evaluation solely emerges through social interaction and hierarchical comparison of bodies (see Przybylo/ Rodrigues 2018: 8).

Furthermore, I have argued that theoretical tools which can be used to understand the lived experience of abject bodies in regards to visibility are surveillance, discipline and oppression as well as hyper(in)visibility. In terms of general aspects, visibility is stated to hold power and is considered as a social process that influences the result of what we see (see Tischner 2013: 44). In addition, its relation to recognition as well as acknowledgement (see Gailey 2014: 9) and the dialectical inseparability of visibility and invisibility are highlighted (ibid.: 18). It is further elaborated that when bodies are in line with body and beauty norms they experience positive visibility. In comparison, bodies that do not meet beauty ideals without violating body norms are understood to be less positive visible but still benefit from positive invisibility. In contrast, bodies that cannot or do not meet either of the norms are considered to experience both visibility and invisibility in negative terms.

Foucault's theorization on Bentham's concept of the Panopticon is thereby stressed as helpful in explaining why people engage in self-disciplining around imposed appearance and behavioural norms: to avoid judgement and punishment due to surveillance (see Tischner 2013: 45). Alongside this internalization and self-surveillance, institutions such as medicine and education are highlighted to violently enforce these norms too (see Spade/ Willse 2015: 3, after Stoler 1995, 2002; Chow 2002; Spivak 1988). Thus, through the means of visibility, people are not only recognized to relentlessly scrutinize themselves but as well each other's bodies (see Gill 2021: 11f).

Building on the previous theory, Gailey's concept of hyper(in)visibility is argued to be necessary to understand the specificity of abject bodies lived experience. "To be hyper(in)visible means that a person is sometimes paid exceptional attention and is sometimes exceptionally overlooked, and it can happen simultaneously" (Gailey 2014: 19). People with abject bodies are understood to be often hyperinvisible in the sense that their desires, lived experiences, subjectivities and needs are disregarded while at the same time hypervisible, since their bodies are under heightened surveillance, criticism and judgement (see ibid.).

While the concept has been originally theorized around fat embodiment, I have claimed it as useful for understanding the lived experience of disabled and trans bodies (ibid.: 168).

Analysing how people in body liberation movement engage with these experiences and which strategies they use to struggle against the hyper(in)visibility of their abject bodies, I have generated and discussed four themes: 1) knowledge production on power structures, 2) mental health is health, 3) fat resistance and 4) solidarity and allyship. The empirical material has thereby been approached with an intersectional, decolonial methodology (see Spivak 1988: 82) grounded in an understanding of situated knowledge (see Haraway 1988: 585) and the composite model of disability (see Baril 2015: 60) and the method of reflexive thematic analysis (see Clarke/ Braun 2021: 331) has been employed.

In terms of knowledge production, I have identified education and the sharing of intersectional experiences to be central. The idea within the movement is highlighted to be that through problematizing oppression, the power structures which lead to hypervisibility of abject bodies can be directly targeted with the hope of ending the process of abjection altogether. The following strategies of normalization are thereby to be found: the contestation of framing fat as unfit, wrong, undesirable, ridiculous or inferior (see Taub et al. 2003: 170), the cultural destigmatisation of fatness and the demedicalization of fat people through the application of the social model of disability. Additionally, the shared knowledge within the movement is presented around the subsequent topics of: 1) body performance and conformity pressures, 2) discrimination based on body norms, 3) dimensions of fatphobia (internalized, interpersonal, systematic), 4) coded language and insincere health concerns, and 5) structural deficits as well rigorous mistreatment and misdiagnosis of fat people in medicine and health care. The sharing of such insights into their daily lives by people within the movement is recognized to be part of an oppositional knowledge production that challenges the otherwise hyperinvisibility of lived experiences. Intersectionality is thereby highlighted to be a regularly referred to concept in the data and the differences in experiences in terms of both the location on the fat spectrum and gender nonconformativity are elaborated on.

Furthermore, people within the movement have been understood to engage with their experience of hyper(in)visibility by advocating for mental health as health. Reconstructing health towards an understanding of holistic wellness and meeting people's needs are highlighted as important strategies in people's accounts; similarly to the acknowledgement that being fat in a fat hating world is hard and exhausting, evokes strong feelings and affects one's mental health. Thus, the statement that abject bodies' reoccurring poor health is due to

discrimination rather than the consequence of an ‘inherently risky’ embodiment as well as the conceptualisation of thinking physical health and mental health together have been connected to Margaret Price’s concept of the bodymind (see Bê 2019: 1335). Since living in a state of hyper(in)visibility means that one’s desires and needs are rigorously overlooked and ignored, making those needs visible, claiming them as important and attending to them are regarded as further strategies in the struggle against oppression. Working towards body peace and healing, embracing rest, self-compassion and patience, giving room to all upcoming feelings, learning to let go of shame as well as unlearning harmful beliefs are thereby presented to be at the core of meeting abject bodies’ needs.

Moreover, strategies of resistance that encompass direct confrontations of discrimination and small everyday acts have been identified to be commonly employed. Within the analysis they are grouped around the subthemes of withstanding oppression as well as celebration and joy. Existing and showing up in the world in line with one’s authentic self and surviving the oppression resulting from being visibly non-normative are recognized as resistance. Further strategies against hyper(in)visibility in everyday life are understood to be unapologetic self-expression, refusing to judge or change the body and claiming a positive fat identity that needs no explanation and stands for the equal value. Additionally, making fashion choices against societal expectations and claiming fat bodies as beautiful are highlighted to be further forms of everyday resistance. So is celebrating fat people for their achievements and incredible resilience, enjoying delicious food without shame, moving the body only in ways that feel good and having fun while taking selfies and pictures. The publicly visible advocacy and representation of fat celebration and joy is thereby argued to function as a way to interrupt processes of dehumanisation of fat bodies and as a form of pleasure activism (see Atherton 2021: 32f, after Brown 2019: 13) that can lead to the empowerment of other fat people.

Lastly, people in the body liberation movement have been explained to struggle against the hyper(in)visibility of their abject bodies by drawing on solidarity and demanding allyship that focuses on taking actions. The main subthemes are 1) listening and self-reflection, 2) safety and protection as well as 3) access and inclusion. Frequently reoccurring demands regarding solidarity within the community itself have been identified to be the centring of the most marginalized voices and for more privileged people to stand back. In terms of allyship, the following actions are highlighted: thin people should listen to and believe the lived experience shared by fat people, reflect on their own behaviour and interrogate their thin privilege. Engaging with the data regarding the subtheme of safety and protection, both creating spaces

without violence and changing the material conditions through for example financial support are presented as further steps. Moreover, defending and actively standing up for fat people in everyday interactions as well as having conversations with family and friends about fatphobia and diet culture are identified as crucial actions for allies. Additionally, the advocacy of people in the body liberation movement for more inclusion and accessibility in health, sports, fashion, public spaces as well as in the community itself is understood as another strategy against the hyperinvisibility of the most marginalized fat people. The demands of taking action in this regards are highlighted to centre around the following aspects: 1) planning events with accessibility in mind, 2) providing public information about the accessibility of places, 3) officially and specifically inviting people with more accessibility needs and 4) prioritizing inclusion and accommodation of every body no matter the range of their mobility or ability. In summary, struggling against the hyper(in)visibility of abject bodies is concluded to be a collective task and for it to succeed, people have to work on themselves individually, in community and across coalitions.

Returning back to addressing the silences within gender studies, I argue that this previously presented knowledge produced by fat, trans and disabled people should be recognised as important, valuable and expert knowledge within the field. In line with prior scholarship I assert that more research needs to be done that looks at these intersections, interrogates coalition building as well as solidarity and attends to the relationship between knowledge and action. Moreover, turning towards the body liberation movement itself, I advocate for supplementing the existing strategies in the struggle against the hyper(in)visibility of abject bodies by embracing ambivalence, ordinariness and ugliness and to use these previously introduced concepts for continuing to build alliances between fat, transgender and disability activism. Lastly, addressing all straight sized people benefitting from thin-privilege like myself, I argue to follow the outlined calls of fat people to take actions as an ally in your own social circles. Wanting to highlight the visions for a better future from the body liberation movement once more, I give the last words to the queer, fat, Black activist and author of the book *Reclaim Ugly* Vanessa Rochelle Lewis:

I invite you to join me in a world where we don't find validation and identity at the expense of other people. Where we don't recognize our beauty, worth, or brilliance by comparing ourselves to other people and deeming them less than. [...] Where we don't create hierarchies rooted in how we look or what size we are or how we express our gender or whether we are cis or stealth enough. Where we don't chastise folks who ask for more and better and call them names. [...] I know that we can find less violent ways to communicate with each other and to deal with the people who harm us, who we don't like, who we need to hold accountable, who we don't understand, and who we feel intimidated by. We have so many options of expression (Lewis 2019).

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Appendix

Appendix 1: First Page of Google Search

Google "body liberation" movement X Q

Alle Bilder Shopping Maps News Mehr Suchfilter

Ungefähr 20.200 Ergebnisse (0,41 Sekunden)

<https://bodyliberationphotos.com> · ... · Diese Seite übersetzen
What are Body Liberation & Fat Liberation? | Seattle
Body liberation is freedom from social and political systems of oppression that designate certain bodies as more worthy, healthy, and desirable than others.


Ähnliche Fragen

What is the body liberation movement?
What is the body positivity movement called?
What does the body positivity movement do?
Is the body positivity movement harmful?
Feedback geben

<https://www.uvm.edu> · health · bo... · Diese Seite übersetzen
Body Image and Body Liberation - The University of Vermont
As the Center for Health and Wellbeing we believe that all bodies are worthy and that all bodies deserve respect. Period. We define **body liberation** as the ...

<https://risecenter.ucla.edu> · body-li... · Diese Seite übersetzen
Body Liberation Series | UCLA Rise Center
The **Body Liberation Series** is a collaboration between the RISE Center and campus partners, including CAPS, CARE, SHEP, the LGBTQ Campus Resource Center, ...

<https://www.instagram.com> · body... · Diese Seite übersetzen
Body.Liberation.Movement - Instagram
Body Liberation through joyful movement, acceptance, love, and self care. ... Héy y'all! We are so excited to bring **Body Liberation Movement** outdoors!

<https://www.youtube.com> · watch · Diese Seite übersetzen
So You Want to Fight for Body Liberation. Now What? - YouTube

So You Want to Fight for **Body Liberation**. Now What? Watch later. Share. Copy link. Info. Shopping. Tap to unmute.
YouTube · Participant · 30.11.2020

10 wichtige Momente in diesem Video

<https://www.mcgilltribune.com> · to... · Diese Seite übersetzen
Toward body liberation - The McGill Tribune
14.09.2021 — Toward **body liberation** ... many activists feel as though the fat acceptance **movement**—which aims to tangibly improve plus-sized people's ...

<http://www.themilitantbaker.com> · ... · Diese Seite übersetzen
WHY I'VE CHOSEN BODY LIBERATION OVER BODY LOVE ...
WHY I'VE CHOSEN **BODY LIBERATION** OVER BODY LOVE ... daily feel like they're somehow falling at this **movement** that is allegedly supposed to offer freedom.

<https://naafa.org> · community-voices · Diese Seite übersetzen
What fat liberation means to me: It's not just about "all bodies"
24.05.2021 — Is fat liberation different from **body liberation**? Though I happily identify publicly with lots of interrelated **movements** — body acceptance, ...

Andere suchten auch nach
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Hilfe Feedback geben Datenschutzerklärung Nutzungsbedingungen

Appendix 2: Record List of Data Collection

ID Code	Name, Content, Publication Date	Retrieval Date	Type of Data	Source
V_1	Virgie Tovar, Lose Hate Not Weight, TedxSoMa, 19.07.2017	12.06.2022	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZnsamRfx tY
V_2	Sonya Renee Taylor, Bodies as Resistance: Claiming the Political Act of Being Oneself, TedxMarin, 18.10.2017	12.06.2022	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWI9AZk uPVg&list=PLWHmE8Fw9SCGSIdzVVrGhn3 CYAQ-QiqLz&index=7
V_3	Claire Hersh & Gloria Lucas, So You Want to Fight for Body Liberation. Now What?, 30.11.2020	12.06.2022	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1Z_VMe bWG8
I_fotc_1.1- I_fotc_1.4	@freshoutthecocoon, post about lockdown and body, 20.04.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CN3wQswLhnc/
I_fotc_2	@freshoutthecocoon, post about diet-industry, acceptance & shame, 03.01.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CJlebWnlvXn/
I_fotc_3	@freshoutthecocoon, post about fatphobia, 28.02.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CL2LHVAF1V W/
I_fotc_4_v	@freshoutthecocoon, post about women and fatphobia, 10.03.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ca8Fef3PQnc/
I_fotc_5	@freshoutthecocoon, post about body image, 01.01.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CJhAE7klM8k/
I_nf_1	@nolosefats, post about fat fashion, 30.07.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CR9pUxnLq0q/
I_fwoc_1	@fatwomenofcolor, post about rest as resistance, 22.10.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CVVjw-WICAc/
I_fwoc_2	@fatwomenofcolor, post about oppression and leisure time, 26.09.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CUSrvuzF1sz/
I_fwoc_3	@fatwomenofcolor, post about unflattering selfie, 24.09.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CUM7MQvtj7M/
I_fwoc_4	@fatwomenofcolor, post about rest as resistance, 07.09.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CTiTRGy110u/

I_fwoc_5	@fatwomenofcolor, post about boundaries as a fat person, 26.08.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CTCILyVgWUY/
I_blr_1	@body.lib.robinhood, post about bodily performance expectations, 25.03.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbgbfqGnOfNI/
I_blr_2	@body.lib.robinhood, post about centering marginalized voices, 18.03.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbQmJtLJ6Me/
I_blr_3	@body.lib.robinhood, post about reminders on the world ob*sity day, 05.03.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CatHMWYurvj/
I_blr_4	@body.lib.robinhood, post about weight-loss and anti-fatness, 03.03.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CapsjEbJgKm/
I_blr_5	@body.lib.robinhood, post about fat bodies doing sports, 20.01.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CY7tEojomO0/
I_iaif_1.1- I_iaif_1.6	@iamivyfelicia, post about body concepts, 18.03.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbPnrW5u-U4/
I_iaif_2	@iamivyfelicia, post about body safety, 17.01.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CY1b076Lhkr/
I_iaif_3	@iamivyfelicia, post about wellness and weight, 24.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd8yAtYrLJ3/
I_iaif_4	@iamivyfelicia, post about body policing and peace, 05.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdLkgjpLErb/
I_iaif_5	@iamivyfelicia, post about quotes and affirmations, 25.02.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CaaZIxDPZGI/
I_itf_1	@itstransfat, post about visibility and trans people, 01.04.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cbyjy7iMZvc/
I_itf_2.1- I_itf_2.4	@itstransfat, post about disability and queer pride, 29.05.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CPZlnrkrR3R/
I_dcb_1	@dr_chairbreaker, post about fatness, sickness, disability; 13.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cdgg3tovIRc/
I_dcb_2	@dr_chairbreaker, post about naturalness of disability & fatness, 17.02.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CaEN7cdLggi/
I_dcb_3	@dr_chairbreaker, post about non-fat peoples knowledge, 05.01.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CYXLY9ivz8C/

I_dcb_4	@dr_chairbreaker, post about censorship of fat people on Instagram, 18.11.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CWbqYhIBNUF/
I_yff_1.1- I_yff_1.5	@yrfatfriend, post about sharing anti-fat sentiments, 08.12.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CXO2MMMPiB7/
I_yff_2.1- I_yff_2.2	@yrfatfriend, post about supporting fat people, 14.11.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CWQwMAwpWcQ/
I_yff_s_1.1- I_yff_s_1.29	@yrfatfriend, story about peoples solidarity wishes from the community, 130 weeks ago	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17847249565801510/
I_yff_s_2.1- I_yff_s_2.61	@yrfatfriend, story about what infinitfat people wish from community, 160 weeks ago	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17956200820272679/
I_htb_1	@hannahtalksbodies, post about health and ableism, 26.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CeBgAuULADF/
I_htb_2	@hannahtalksbodies, post about BMI and pathologisation, 20.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdyXbhrQiT/
I_htb_3	@hannahtalksbodies, post about mental and physical health, 12.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CddakggguBC_/
I_htb_4_v	@hannahtalksbodies, video and post about treating non-fat and fat clients, 10.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdYUvTDsNsx/
I_htb_5	@hannahtalksbodies, post about body liberation, 05.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdLdNoJLJgf/
I_jh_1.1- I_jh_1.10	@jordallenhall, post about visibility and liberation, 31.03.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbxiBOdgQ_k/
I_jh_2	@jordallenhall, post about fat trans tips, 04.04.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb8czkkO4-a/
I_cft_1	@comfyfattravels, post about fatness and movement, 08.06.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CegngYTr6C3/
I_sy_1	@stephanieyeboah, post about weight loss surgery, 17.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdqwTSmo9ig/
I_sy_2	@stephanieyeboah, post about putting live on hold, 03.04.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb5E6J7No7l/
I_fmph_1	@fattymph, post about antifatness, 14.04.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcVgdrqrbMM/
I_fmph_2.1- I_fmph_2.3	@fattymph, post about blame and health, 13.04.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcS6mGnrPW9/

I_fmph_3.1- I_fmph_3.2	@fattymph, post about fat anger, 03.04.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb4uiGSu2wX/
I_fmph_4.1- I_fmph_4.4	@fattymph, post about fatness and doctors, 21.06.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CQYoZHUrfS3/
I_fmph_5.1- I_fmph_5.5	@fattymph, post about trans patients and weight loss, 14.06.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CQG6YmPLoBN/
I_tfdu_1	@thefatdoctoruk, post about fatness and ob*sity, 10.06.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CeFLm6I9bp/
I_tfdu_2	@thefatdoctoruk, post about body as protest, 04.06.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CeYRVQDIvKk/
I_tfdu_3.1- I_tfdu_3.4	@thefatdoctoruk, post about celebrating fat people, 01.06.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CeRCmdRIFig/
I_j_1_v	@jervae, video about possible actions for white women, 22.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd3cZrEFKZa/
I_j_2.1- I_j_2.3	@jervae, post about barrier to ending fatphobia, 12.07.2020	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CCjp5DzDS4i/
I_fm_1.1- I_fm_1.7	@fatmarquisele, post about unlearning knowledge about food, 15.04.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcWsR_FrMYq/
I_fm_2.1- I_fm_2.6	@fatmarquisele, post about fatphobia disguised as health concerns, 21.01.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CY-SkswrLFD/
I_i2_1	@Ivernon2000, post about cellulite, 08.06.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ceg22VYrHOD/
I_i2_2	@Ivernon2000, post about luxury and fatness, 30.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CeMNT4sjFNk/
I_i2_3	@Ivernon2000, post about eating all the food, 25.05.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd_GiNRpObj/
I_htl_1.1- I_htl_1.4	@huntythelion, post about construction of health, 08.02.2022	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CZuV7H9uDSf/
I_htl_2_v	@huntythelion, post about ugliness, 28.07.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CR4ifl3IK7E/
I_htl_3	@huntythelion, post about exhaustion of fighting, 01.04.2021	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CNGe6urr1-b/
I_htl_4	@huntythelion, post about body and non-binary identity, 14.07.2020	13.06.2022	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/p/CConLQBBjEr/

B_jb_1	Jes Baker, blogpost about body liberation, 01.12.2020	12.06.2022	Blog	http://www.themilitantbaker.com/2018/06/why-ive-chosen-body-liberation-over.html
B_jb_2	Jes Baker, blogpost about ugly pictures, 02.01.2021	12.06.2022	Blog	http://www.themilitantbaker.com/2017/11/why-world-needs-more-unflattering.html#more
Bo_dslh_1	Da'Shaun L. Harrison, chapter 1: Beyond Self-Love, 2021,	14.06.2022	Book	Harrison, Da'Shaun L. (2021): Belly of the Beast: The Politics of Anti-Fatness as Anti-Blackness, 1-9, Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
Bo_dslh_2	Da'Shaun L. Harrison, chapter 2: Pretty Ugly: The Politics of Desire, 2021	14.06.2022	Book	Harrison, Da'Shaun L. (2021): Belly of the Beast: The Politics of Anti-Fatness as Anti-Blackness, 10-32, Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
Bo_dslh_2	Da'Shaun L. Harrison, chapter 6: Meeting Gender's End, 2021	14.06.2022	Book	Harrison, Da'Shaun L. (2021): Belly of the Beast: The Politics of Anti-Fatness as Anti-Blackness, 85-104, Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
Bo_jb_1	Sonya Renee Taylor, guest essay: Weighting to be Seen: Race, Invisibility and the Body Positivity, 2015	14.06.2022	Book	Baker, Jes (2015): Things No One Will Tell Fat Girls: A Handbook for Unapologetic Living, Berkeley: Sealpress.
Bo_jb_2	Jes Baker, chapter 6: Selfies Aren't Selfish: Narcissism Is Good for You, 2015	14.06.2022	Book	Baker, Jes (2015): Things No One Will Tell Fat Girls: A Handbook for Unapologetic Living, Berkeley: Sealpress.
Bo_jb_3	Shanna Katz Kattari, guest essay: Body Love and Disability: Intersections of Identity, 2015	14.06.2022	Book	Baker, Jes (2015): Things No One Will Tell Fat Girls: A Handbook for Unapologetic Living, Berkeley: Sealpress.
Bo_jb_4	Sam Dylan Finch, guest essay: My Trans Masculinity Has Curves, Fat, and Attitude, 2015	14.06.2022	Book	Baker, Jes (2015): Things No One Will Tell Fat Girls: A Handbook for Unapologetic Living, Berkeley: Sealpress.

Appendix 3: List of People from Instagram (Date: 15.06.2022)

Instagram Name	Real Name, (Pronouns)	Content of Instagram Info	Known Identity Categories	Amount of Followers/ Posts	Source
@freshoutthecocoons	Joy Cox (she/her)	Pro-fat, pro-Black pod 🖤 #fatgirlsstaywinning Trolls get blocked 🚫 Book: "Fat Girls in Black Bodies" available in stores! 🌟 drjoycox.com	Fat, Black, women	6,355/ 1,026	https://www.instagram.com/freshoutthecocoon/
@nolosefats	Nolose	We are a vibrant community of fat queer and trans folks, and our allies, with a shared commitment to end the oppression of fat people!	Fat, trans, queer	684/18	https://www.instagram.com/nolosefats/
@fatwomenofcolor	Fat Women Of Color™ (they/them)	Community 👥 Collective Care 🙌 Body Liberation 🌿 Holistic Wellness for Black & Brown fat women Founder & CEO: @iamivyfelicia Learn more👉 linkin.bio/fatwomenofcolor	Fat, Black/ Brown, women	35,700/ 1,734	https://www.instagram.com/fatwomenofcolor/
@body.lib.robinhood	Robin Zabiegalski (they/them)	Writer, 📖 Health & Wellness Feature Writer Yoga Teacher👉 Fat enby bisexual writing about fatness, fat fitness, eating disorder recovery, & mental health lnk.bio/ashl	Fat, white, enby, bisexual	2,451/ 1,733	https://www.instagram.com/body.lib.robinhood/

@iamivyfelicia	Ivy Felicia (she/her)	Personal Trainer Find peace in your body so you can THRIVE in your life. Sacred Tools: 🌿 Holistic Wellness ⚡ Energy Healing 🌿 Plant Medicine START YOUR JOURNEY TODAY 📍 linkin.bio/iamivyfelicia	Fat, Black, women	16,200/ 473	https://www.instagram.com/iamivyfelicia/
@itstransfat	Anna Nicole Smith (they/them)	Chicago's premiere fat crippled gutter slut 👤♀ Y2Klien 🗿 Anna Nicole Smith in a wheelchair 🗿🗿🗿 Venmo: @itstransfat gofund.me/5de8f32c	Fat, Black, trans, disabled	5,231/ 544	https://www.instagram.com/itstransfat/
@dr_chairbreaker	Caleb Luna (they/them)	Artist, writer, performer, theorist of the body ❤️REVENGE BODY (@nomadicpress 2022) 🗿 co-host @unsolicitedftb 🗿🗿🗿 linktr.ee/chairbreaker	Superfat, PoC, non-binary, queer, disabled	30,000/ 2,029	https://www.instagram.com/dr_chairbreaker/
@yrfatfriend	Aubrey Gordon (she/her)	Writer. Fat white queer cis lady. @maintenancephase 📖 What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat ✉️ yrfatfriend@gmail.com (DMs closed) aubreygordon.net	Fat, white, women, queer	245,000/ 348	https://www.instagram.com/yrfatfriend/

@hannahtalksbodies	Hannah Fuhlendorf (she/her)	Counselor, Activist, Educator Fat Liberation & Health Justice @letsdivethru therapist ✉ partnerships@divethru.com Venmo: @hfulhendorf linktr.ee/HannahTalksBodies	Fat, white, women	35,000/ 187	https://www.instagram.com/hannahtalksbodies/
@jordallenhall	Jordan Underwood (they/he)	Jordan Underwood they/he jordanunderwood.com/linkinbio	Fat, white, trans/ non- binary	27,100/ 804	https://www.instagram.com/jordallenhall/
@comfyfattravels	J Aprileo (they/them)	Blogger I write about fat accessibility, gender, and body liberation >> comfyfat.com ✨Full Circle Body Liberation course by @fatgirlflow out now 🌟 ✨ bit.ly/3zbRFle	Superfat, white, non- binary	37,100/ 403	https://www.instagram.com/comfyfattravels/
@stephanieyeboah	Stephanie Yeboah (she/her)	Digital Creator A fat girl with opinions. 📁 Author / Writer / Body image advocate / Award-winning Content Creator / Public speaker ✉ steph@ightalent.com www.stephanieyeboah.com	Fat, Black, women	236,000/ 5,279	https://www.instagram.com/stephanieyeboah/
@fattymph	Monica Kriete (she/her)	writer, consultant, educator fighting weight stigma in public health & medicine. I block bots, creeps & diet accounts 🌐 she/her/hers central pa 🍷 pipewrenchmag.com/public-health-is- failing-fat-people	Fat, white, women	6,655/ 230	https://www.instagram.com/fattymph/

@thefatdoctoruk	Asher Larmie (they/he)	Fat trans masc non binary former GP Unapologetically "extreme" in their belief that fat people deserve equal rights. solo.to/fatdoctor	Fat, white, trans	5,569/ 46	https://www.instagram.com/thefatdoctoruk/
@jervae	Jervae (they/she)	Healing Artist + Thoughts + Strategies Art 🗣️ Ideas 🖐️ Action Founder @fatblackliberation gofundme.com/fatblackliberation	Fat, Black	27,000/ 28	https://www.instagram.com/jervae/
@fatmarquisele	Marquisele Mercedes (she/her)	AKA Mikey. Black/disabled/fat liberationist writer-educator. Phding @Brown. 20% @unsolicitedftb. Bronx-bred. Comments ☹️ limited. bio.site/marquisele	Fat, Black, women, disabled	20,800/ 128	https://www.instagram.com/fatmarquisele/
@lvernon2000	Leah Vernon (not specified)	Out Now 🗳️ Unashamed: Musings of a Fat, Black Muslim 🗣️ Inclusive Content Creator Public Speaker Plus Size Hijabi Model #bodypositive 📍 NYC www.amazon.com/Union-Leah-Vernon/dp/1662500351/ref=tmm_pap_swa	Fat, Black, women, muslim	64,000/ 1,822	https://www.instagram.com/lvernon2000/
@huntythelion	Hunter Shackelford (they/them)	Black Fat Cyborg From the South 🌟 Storyteller • Abolitionist • Death Worker 📍 DMV \$hunterthelion 🖤 Follow and Support: @whoskillingus deathfeminism.com	Fat, Black, gender fugitive	56,000/ 28	https://www.instagram.com/huntythelion/